COUNTRY LIFE

EVERY WEEK

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

Down, boy!

Our search for Britain's naughtiest dog

Pints, poetry and the pubs that inspired greatness

'I've got your back': good turns in the animal kingdom

Let there be light: the art of glass architecture

BRIGHTS OF NETTLEBED

ONE FAMILY SPECIALISING IN FINE FURNITURE SINCE 1866

Brand New & Exclusive

The Chinoiserie Emperor Sideboard

The Chinoiserie Emperor Sideboard draws inspiration from 18th-century Chinese architecture, featuring a balanced, symmetrical form rooted in imperial design. Hand-painted chinoiserie brushwork and gold-tone accents elevate its stately presence, complemented by finely cast hardware.

Three elegant doors open to a spacious interior with sturdy shelving, offering practical, well-organised storage. Every element is hand-finished by master artisans, preserving time-honoured decorative techniques. Structurally thoughtful and beautifully executed, this sideboard brings heritage artistry and functionality into the home. A commanding centrepiece for dining rooms, living spaces or hallways, it is crafted to be admired and cherished for generations.

Width: 162cm | Depth: 41cm | Height: 92cm

Price £8,735

www.brightsofnettlebed.co.uk

HOME APPROVAL SERVICE . BESPOKE COMMISSIONS . 15,000SQ FT OXFORDSHIRE SHOWROOM

NETTLEBED | OXFORDSHIRE | RG9 5DD (TUES-SAT) | 01491 378626 | KING'S RD | LONDON | SW6 2DX (MON-FRI)

Knight Frank

REF:HNG012497105

DEVIZES, WILTSHIRE

A substantial and beautifully presented Georgian house interior designed by Ashley Hicks, all set in an elevated position overlooking its own garden and parkland.

10 bedrooms | 6 bathrooms | 5 reception rooms | Upper mezzanine with artist's studio | Housekeeper's flat | 1 bedroom lodge | Garaging for 4 cars
Tack room | Workshop | Gardener's room | Outbuildings | Stabling | Range of storerooms | Swimming pool | Parkland | Woodland gardens
Approximately 47.39 acres | EPC E | Freehold | Council Tax band H | Pewsey 14 miles (London Paddington from 62 minutes)

Guide price £4,900,000

Knight Frank London
020 7861 1080
edward.cunningham@knightframk.com

Knight Frank London
020 7861 1186
james.walker@knightframk.com

Knight Frank Hungerford
01488 688530
mark.potter@knightframk.com

MICHAEL GRAHAM

Biddenham, Bedfordshire

Guide Price: £2,000,000

5 Bedrooms | **4** Reception Rooms | **2** Bathrooms | **D** EPC

An Edwardian country house in a private position surrounded by around 2 acres of landscaped gardens with a tennis court. The oldest parts of the property date back to 1910, and over 3,500 sq. ft. of accommodation is arranged over two floors. There is extensive driveway parking and a detached four bay garage and garden machinery store.

Michael Graham Bedford
Jonathon Tolmie **01234 220000**

Michael Graham London
Richard Banks **020 8092 1888**

Knight Frank

REF: TNW180357

GOUDHURST, KENT

A remarkable Grade II* listed home set on elevated ground with stunning views over its gardens, paddock and the countryside beyond.

6 bedrooms | 3 bathrooms | 5 reception rooms | Landscaped gardens | Large barn | Garaging | Gym | Home office | Tennis court | Outbuildings
Paddock | Approximately 5 acres | EPC F | Freehold | Council Tax band H
Goudhurst village 1 mile | Marden station 4.2 miles (London Bridge from 48 minutes)

Guide price £2,950,000

Knight Frank Tunbridge Wells
01892 772942
simon.biddulph@knightframk.com

Knight Frank London
020 7861 5390
julia.meadowcroft@knightfrank.com

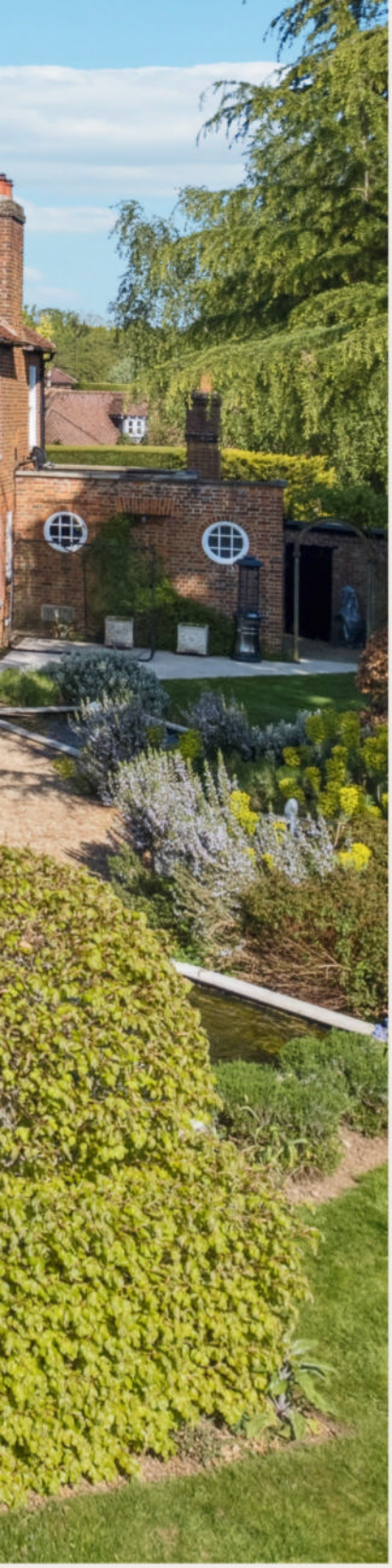
GRADE II LISTED GEORGIAN FAMILY HOME

6 4 7 | 1 acre

Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire. Guide £3.5 million

A fine Grade II listed Georgian family home with attractive elevations and generous proportions, offering seven elegant reception rooms, six bedrooms, four bathrooms and secondary accommodation. Set on the edge of a popular Chilterns village in a semi-rural position, it stands within about one acre of beautifully landscaped gardens and grounds that include a swimming pool.

Freehold | Council Tax Band = H | EPC = D



Mike Lillitou

Savills Amershan
01494 304 187
MLillitou@savills.com

Eddie Hamilton

Savills Country Department
01494 370 193
eddie.hamilton@savills.com

savills

Surrey, Linchmere Ridge

Guide Price £2,999,000

&

A handsome family house with annexe, set in approximately 15 acres on a sought-after private lane within the South Downs National Park

Haslemere: 2.3 miles (Waterloo from 49 mins), Liphook: 4.7 miles, Guildford: 16 miles

Hall | Drawing room | Conservatory | Family room | Study | Kitchen/breakfast room | Utility room | Principal bedroom with dressing room and bathroom | 5 Further bedrooms (2 ensuite) | Family bathroom | Annexe with games room and office

Garage | Double carport | Swimming pool | Tennis court | Mature gardens | Large private woodland area with high ropes walk

About 15 acres

Jenette Soulsby
Haslemere Office
01428 661 077
jenette.soulsby@struttandparker.com

James Machell
Country Department
020 7591 2213
james.machell@struttandparker.com

STRUTT&PARKER
BNP PARIBAS GROUP

West Sussex, Warnham

Guide Price £4,250,000

&

An outstanding country property with excellent equestrian facilities, swimming pool, tennis court, immaculately presented with stunning views towards the North Downs

Warnham Station: 1.7 miles, Horsham: 4 miles, Dorking: 10 miles, Gatwick: 16 miles, Guildford: 20 miles, London: 37 miles (London Victoria from 51 mins)
Hall | 3 Reception rooms | Study/office | Kitchen/breakfast room | Party barn | Principal bedroom suite with dressing room | 5 Further bedrooms
4 Further bathrooms (3 ensuite) | Swimming pool | Tennis court | Garages | Landscaped gardens | Bluebell wood | Stable yard | Tack room | Feed room and wash bay/solarium | 2 One-bedroom apartments | Home gym | Dog grooming parlour | All-weather manège | Paddocks | Further pasture

About 23.9 acres

James Machell
Country Department
020 7591 2213
james.machell@struttandparker.com

Holly Pearn
Horsham Office
01403 246 790
holly.pearn@struttandparker.com

JSA: Knight Frank
Oliver Rodbourne
020 7861 1093
oliver.rodbourne@knightfrank.com

Hertfordshire, Preston

Guide Price £2,500,000

&

An elegant Arts and Crafts house on the edge of a traditional rural village

Hitchin: 4 miles, Stevenage: 7 miles (Kings Cross 24 minutes), Harpenden: 10 miles, London: 34 miles
Reception hall | Drawing room | Dining room | Family room | Kitchen | Breakfast room | Utility room | Cloakroom
Principal bedroom suite with bathroom and dressing room | 4 Further bedrooms | Family bathroom
Extensive range of traditional outbuildings including workshop, boiler room, and coach house
Double garage and wood store | Old hen house and store | Mature gardens and grounds

About 1.49 acres

Mark Rimell
Country Department
020 7591 2213
mark.rimell@struttandparker.com

Sally Noakes
Harpenden Office
01582 764 343
sally.noakes@struttandparker.com

STRUTT&PARKER
BNP PARIBAS GROUP

Surrey, Farnham

Guide Price £2,950,000

&

A detached five-bedroom family home with triple garaging located in an exclusive South Farnham cul-de-sac

Farnham station: 1.2 miles (London Waterloo 1 hr), Guildford: 11.9 miles, Central London: 46 miles
Hall | Drawing room | Study | Dining room | Open-plan kitchen/family room/orangery | Utility
Principal bedroom with ensuite bathroom | 4 Further bedrooms (2 ensuite) | Family bathroom
Outbuilding | Triple garage | Potting shed | Garden | EPC Rating D

Daniel Vasey-MacLeod
Farnham Office
01252 821 102
daniel.vaseymacleod@struttandparker.com

James Machell
Country Department
020 7591 2213
james.machell@struttandparker.com

COUNTRY LIFE

Country-house specialists

Celebrating the designers and specialists with experience and creativity to breathe new life into a country house

On sale March 11, 2026

Don't miss your chance to advertise inside this special issue
Please email Lucy Khosla at lucy.khosla@futurenet.com
or telephone 07583 106990 for more information
Booking deadline: February 26, 2026 by midday

Knight Frank

REF: SHR012420369

WOLLERTON, SHROPSHIRE

A wonderful Grade II* country house with beautiful gardens and grounds, versatile outbuildings and an established award-winning garden business.

6 bedrooms | 3 bathrooms | 3 reception rooms | Cottages | Outbuildings | Approximately 3 acres | Approximately 1.44 acres available by separate negotiation
Freehold | Council Tax bands: The Hall G, The Cottages B

Guide price £1,375,000

Knight Frank Shrewsbury
01743 664200
shrewsbury@knightfrank.com

OnTheMarket

Yielden, Bedfordshire — £2,500,000

An exceptional, totally private, Tudor rectory, renovated and restored, with six-bedrooms, over 6,000 sq. ft., 10 acres and heated pool.

Contact 01234 671807

Bings Heath, Shropshire — £595,000

The Gate House is a four-bedroom property, newly renovated and immaculately presented. Located on the edge of Bings Heath, Astley.

Contact 01743 534852

Wymeswold, Leicestershire — £1,250,000 Offers over

Set within approximately one acre of beautiful, landscaped grounds, an exceptional and eco-efficient four bed detached and extended family home.

Contact 01664 518924

Guyzance, Northumberland — £1,250,000 Offers over

A handsome and recently modernised family home in an outstanding and elevated location with an imperial view.

Contact 01434 671004

Blockley, Gloucestershire — £465,000 Guide price

A most interesting detached individual cottage, situated in an elevated position with views.

Contact 01608 503959

Chillenden, Kent — £1,195,000

Bespoke home cleverly designed to include stunning double height entrance hall and galleried landing. Beautiful village location.

Contact 01233 238793

Cowden Kent — £550,000 Guide price

A beautiful three-bedroom, two-bathroom Victorian period property with stunning views overlooking the countryside in Cowden.

Contact 01892 310740

Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire — £900,000

A comprehensively refurbished period family home in a quiet location close to Chipping Norton town centre.

Contact 01608 503956

Chitterne, Wiltshire — £925,000 Guide price

A handsome and beautifully proportioned property with a charming garden, set on the edge of this popular village.

Contact 01722 515921

Verify at onthemarket.com/only-with-us. Agents specify exclusivity.

All these properties appeared exclusively with us,
24 hours or more before Rightmove or Zoopla.

Only With Us

Hythe, Hampshire — £649,999
Offers in excess of

An exceptional, five-bedroom property, perfectly positioned in the heart of Hythe village. With space and versatility, it is ideal for growing families.

Contact 023 8221 2693

Oxted, Surrey — £2,350,000
Guide price

Tucked away on a small, exclusive, gated development, this unique family home offers a rare combination of architectural flair and practical family living.

Contact 020 3641 3313

Magnolia Gardens, Jersey — £1,750,000

This beautifully renovated four-bedroom, three-bathroom detached home offers a perfect blend of style, comfort, and functionality.

Contact 01534 888855

Abingdon Marina, Oxfordshire — £1,000,000

Four-bedroom townhouse with private mooring. Three storeys each benefitting from a terrace with magnificent views over the water.

Contact 01865 969007

Woodbridge, Suffolk — £475,000
Guide price

An impressive three-storey townhouse, renovated to a high standard and with the benefit of driveway parking in the centre of Woodbridge.

Contact 01473 679734

Stoneygate, Leicester — £1,700,000
Offers over

A beautifully improved Arts and Crafts inspired home boasting seven-bedrooms and three reception rooms, on a plot approaching 0.8 of an acre.

Contact 0116 448 9216

Combe Martin, North Devon — £1,800,000
Guide price

An eight-bedroom Jacobean hall with fine coach house/stabling and tithe barn. Set in beautiful grounds of 13.21 acres.

Contact 01271 457933

Abinger Hammer, Surrey — £1,650,000

A spacious four-bedroom, three-bath family home, refurbished to an exceptionally high standard set in circa 0.4 acres with views.

Contact 01483 665627

Create an alert

To view these and the finest selection of premium properties, search OnTheMarket at CountryLife.co.uk and set up a property alert today.

BRUSHES
ACROSS
EMPIRE
WORKS FROM THE COLLECTION OF SIR JAMES STEWART LOCKHART
Celebrating the discerning eye and enduring legacy of Sir James Stewart Lockhart; scholar, linguist, and diplomat who served in Hong Kong and China from 1879 to 1921. The collection is offered for sale to benefit George Watson's College, Edinburgh.
AUCTION 11 MARCH LIVE IN EDINBURGH & ONLINE
LYON & TURNBULL
AUCTIONEERS SINCE 1826
L&T 200
EDINBURGH 0131 557 8844 | LONDON 020 7930 9115 | GLASGOW 0141 333 1992 | www.lyonandturnbull.com

Trooping Fairies II *(detail)*
oil on board 122 x 61 cms 48 x 24 ins

SEAN JEFFERSON

fairy phenomena

4 – 27 March

Sean Jefferson's fairies are more than whimsical fantasies of modern nostalgia. They resist the twentieth century's *Disneyfication*, that long smoothing of folklore which bleached ambiguity into innocence and turned cautionary tales into harmless entertainment. Sean restores the fairy to its proper strangeness, not a mascot or a moral lesson, but a presence that unsettles as much as it seduces. In his hands, the fairy returns to the thresholds of rural superstition and esoteric practice, to counterculture and marginal belief, and to the more searching side of the imagination where desire and dread sit side by side. His pictures are uncanny, luminous visions that draw us into a reimagined world of myth, superstition, and wonder.

Fully illustrated catalogue available £15

MESSUM'S

DAVID MESSUM FINE ART - EST 1963

12 Bury Street, St. James's
London SW1Y 6AB
+44 (0)20 7287 4448
info@messums.com
davidmessumfineartltd

NOONANS MAYFAIR

THE COLLECTION OF LADY WARDINGTON

TO BE OFFERED FOR SALE AT
NOONANS MAYFAIR

10 MARCH AT 12 NOON

ALL ENQUIRIES
JEWELLERY@NOONANS.CO.UK
020 7016 1700

A DIAMOND BRACELET, CIRCA 1950
ESTIMATE £15,000-20,000

NOONANS MAYFAIR • 16 BOLTON STREET MAYFAIR LONDON W1J 8BQ • WWW.NOONANS.CO.UK

ROSEBERYS
LONDON

Edward Julius Detmold and Charles Maurice Detmold, Two original watercolour illustrations for 'The Jungle Book' 1902/3

AUCTION

Old Master, British & European Pictures

Tuesday 10 March

+44 (0)20 8761 2522 | oldmasters@roseberys.co.uk | **roseberys.co.uk**

CADA's 13th ANNUAL ART & ANTIQUES FAIR

CHELSEA OLD TOWN HALL
KING'S ROAD, LONDON
SW3 5EE

Thur 12 noon - 8 pm
Fri & Sat 11 am - 6 pm
Sun 11 am - 5 pm

CADA
ART ANTIQUES CHELSEA

19 to 22 MARCH 2026

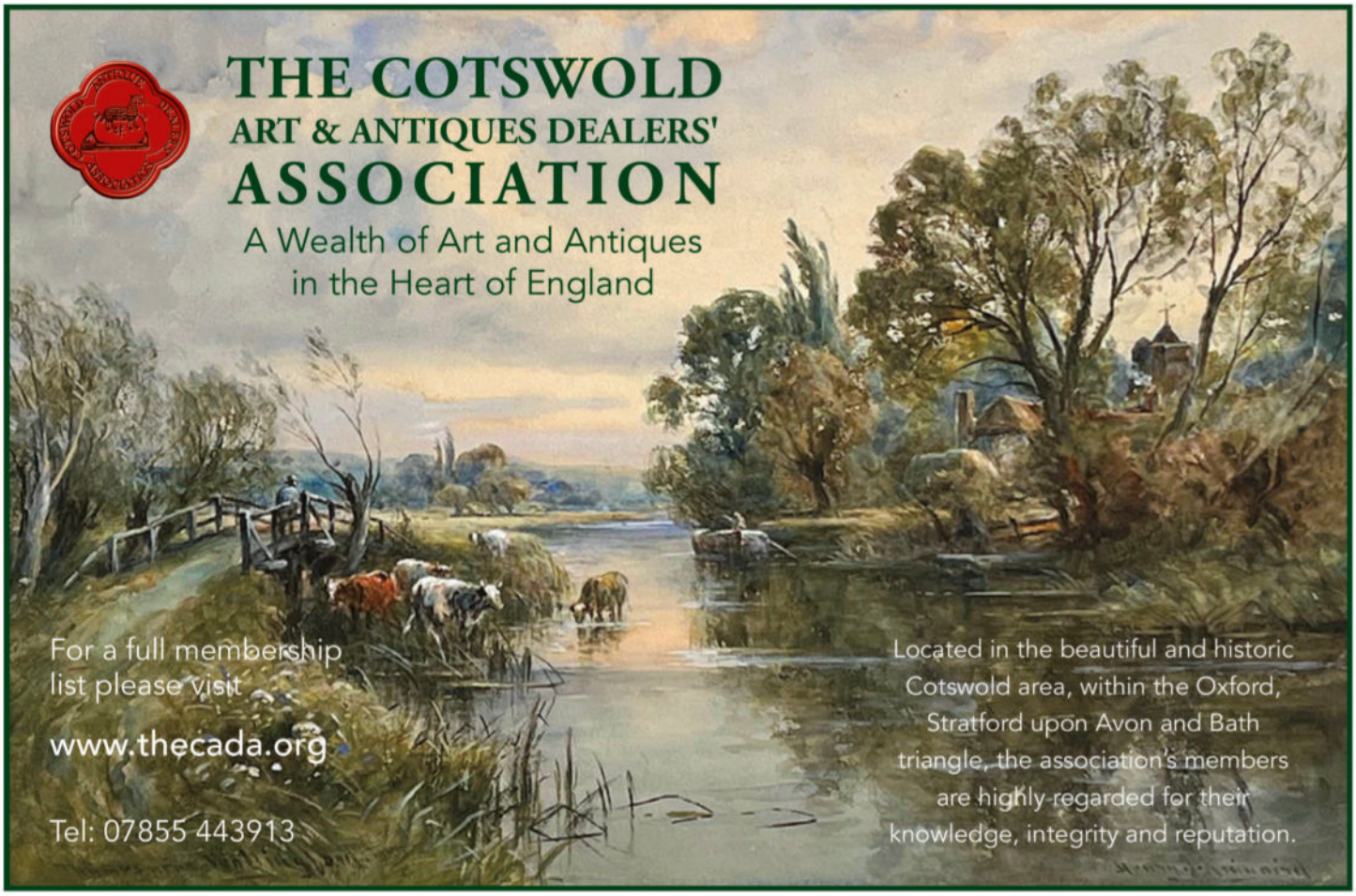
To apply for complimentary tickets to the fair please email: info@thecada.org

Further information
www.thecada.org
T: 07855 443913

Organised by:
The Cotswold Art & Antiques Dealers' Association

WOOLLEY & WALLIS
EST. 1884
PAUL FITZSIMMONS:
A LIFE IN OAK
10TH & 11TH MARCH 2026
SALISBURY | LONDON
ENQUIRIES
Mark Yuan-Richards | myr@woolleys.live
www.woolleyandwallis.co.uk

LONDON
JEWELLERY
AUCTION 22 APRIL
ENTRIES INVITED
TIFFANY & CO.: A PAIR OF BRACELETS, CIRCA 1965
£4,000-6,000 + fees
LYON & TURNBULL
AUCTIONEERS SINCE 1826
Contact our Head of Jewellery SARAH DUNCAN GG
020 7930 9115 | sarah.duncan@lyonandturnbull.com


THE COTSWOLD
ART & ANTIQUES DEALERS'
ASSOCIATION
A Wealth of Art and Antiques
in the Heart of England
For a full membership
list please visit
www.thecada.org
Tel: 07855 443913
Located in the beautiful and historic Cotswold area, within the Oxford, Stratford upon Avon and Bath triangle, the association's members are highly regarded for their knowledge, integrity and reputation.

FINE
JEWELLERY
AUCTION | 17 MARCH
Viewing at Dreweatts London (Highlights) | 10-11 March
Viewing at Dreweatts Newbury (Full Sale) | 13, 15-16 March
Enquiries: jsw@dreweatts.com | 01635 553 553
dreweatts.com
NEWBURY | LONDON
DREWEATTS
EST. 1759

CASSANDRA GOAD
Greco
A Journey to Greece
147 Sloane Street
London

COUNTRY LIFE

VOL CCXXVI NO 9, FEBRUARY 25, 2026

Miss Khadijah Mellah

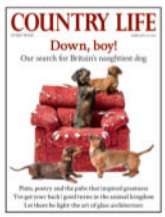
Khadijah is an amateur jockey. She won the Magnolia Cup ladies' charity race at Glorious Goodwood, West Sussex, in 2019 and is the co-founder of the Riding A Dream Academy, supporting young people from under-represented backgrounds into racing. Khadijah is the daughter of Ali and Selma Mellah of Peckham, south London.

Photographed with Mooresfort Abbey at Goodwood Stables, West Sussex, by Anya Campbell

Contents February 25, 2026

Jeff J. Mitchell/Getty

Bully for you: handler Fiona Drysdale leads Charolais Glenericht Vespar into the ring at Stirling Bull Sales in Scotland, where he fetched 60,000 guineas. The top price at Stirling Agricultural Centre was the 75,000 guineas paid for another Charolais, Goldies Vance



Naughty dogs running riot (Luciano de Polo/Alamy)

COVER STORIES

52 Do you own Britain's naughtiest dog?
Calling all cheeky canines—COUNTRY LIFE is once again on a mission to find the most mischievous mutts in the land

56 I've got you, babe
John Lewis-Stempel marvels at Nature's symbiotic relationships, from barnacles hitching a ride on whales to birds debugging deer

68 The pubs that made history
Ashleigh Arnott raises a glass to DNA discovery, D-Day planning and Stilton's exalted status on a pub crawl to end all pub crawls

82 Interiors
Tiffany Daneff admires an Oxfordshire garden's bespoke greenhouse and Amelia Thorpe picks out glorious garden buildings

THIS WEEK

40 Baroness Jan Royall's favourite painting
The former Somerville principal chooses a striking work by an alumna of the Oxford college

42 Country-house treasure
John Goodall unearths a 2,500-year-old Assyrian carving at Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire

44 Legacy of the aesthete bachelor
Contrary to popular belief, the National Trust's portfolio is largely founded on the wealth of single male donors, reveals Michael Hall

50 The legacy
With Crufts on the horizon, Agnes Stamp hails Florence Nagle's campaign for Kennel Club reform

62 Scale model
David Profumo profiles the lake-dwelling charr, a dandyish fish as 'beautiful as a butterfly'

64 It's alive!
Tom Howells meets the British producers rediscovering the flavour of fermented foods such as kefir, kombucha and kraut

74 A lapwing and a prayer
John Lewis-Stempel is lifted by the heart-warming sight of *Vanellus vanellus* picking over the Big Field in February

76 Luxury
Amie Elizabeth White shares the latest in jackets, jewellery and fragrances, as Rankin reveals his favourite things

96 Dear Daphne
Winter-flowering daphnes are a must for every garden, says Charles Quest-Ritson, who shares his favourite varieties

106 Brown study
Harry Pearson traces the story of Britain's love of brown sauce from Hoe's and HP to Daddies

108 Travel
In a new series exploring the best places to visit in the UK, Mark Hedges enjoys the delights of Cornwall's rugged coastline

110 Arts & antiques
Ruth Fainlight treasures her Sibyls poems as a link to lost friends Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes, she tells Carla Passino

114 Reaching for the stars
George III set a trend for the Royal Family to be cheerleaders for scientific advancement, as Matthew Dennison discovers

REGULARS

28 Town & Country
32 Notebook
34 Stuff & nonsense
36 Letters
37 Agromenes
38 Athena
90 Property market
94 Properties of the week
102 In the garden
104 Kitchen garden cook
120 Art market
122 Books
125 Bridge and crossword
131 Classified advertisements
134 Spectator
134 Tottering-by-Gently

COUNTRY LIFE - a week's a long time without it
Subscribe from only £4 an issue*
Visit www.countrylifesubs.co.uk/contents
*Offer open to new UK subscribers only. Overseas rates are available. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. Offer closes on December 31, 2026.

COVNTRY LIFE EST. 1897

Future Publishing Ltd, 121–141 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington, London W2 6JR
0330 390 6591; www.countrylife.co.uk

It's a dog's world

IT may seem odd timing to launch a celebration of the naughtiest dogs (*page 52*) when our television screens are about to be filled with Man's best friend behaving beautifully. Among the obedient spaniels and dignified Pekingese strutting their stuff at Crufts (March 5–8, daily on Channel 4) will be the finalists for the Hero Dog Award. They include therapy and companion animals and springer spaniel Tweed, Europe's first digital detection dog, who has carried out more than 1,000 searches for her police handlers.

Literature, folklore and history are filled with dog heroism, from Bodger and Luath who trekked 300 miles across Canada to find their owners in *The Incredible Journey*, to loyal, tragic Gelert in Welsh legend, to the Irish terriers that acted as messengers during the First World War and explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes's terrier Bothie, the only dog to travel to both the North and South Poles and who was said to be a welcome foil and distraction on a serious mission.

It is that ability of dogs to bring another dimension to life and to make us laugh—if through gritted teeth—as well as their capacity for love, loyalty and honest, non-judgemental companionship that makes us love them. Plus, there is their irrepressible delight in simple daily occurrences: their owner's return after an absence of only 15 minutes, the sound of the lead jangling or joyously happening upon a toy rabbit left under the kitchen table. The late, great novelist and dog aficionado Dame Jilly Cooper would surely be delighted to know that the canine film stars (Gertrude and Badger from *Rivals*) attending her memorial service at Southwark Cathedral were far from over-awed by the occasion.

Our 2019 winner, a Jack Russell called Pici, ate a passport and chewed on a mobile phone, somehow managing to dial 999 and summon the police in the process. There was a rottweiler who flooded a kitchen by turning on the taps and blocking the sink, a chihuahua-cross that herded the peacocks in a London park and the dachshund that locked himself in the car. Rabbit, a much-adored, scruffy Cairn-cross Battersea rescue who was COUNTRY LIFE's inaugural winner, stowed away in an Amazon delivery van and nibbled the parcels. However, he would also sit patiently and calmly on his six-year-old owner's lap as she practised her reading skills on him.

It is no wonder that we humanise dogs and that they feature in more paintings in history than any other animal, from those at the forefront of Veronese's *The Wedding at Cana* to Cecil Aldin's piratical bull terrier Cracker and Gary Bunt's ubiquitous Bert. As Pablo Picasso said of his dachshund, Lump: 'He's not a dog, he's not a little man, he's someone else.'

PPA Front Cover of the Year 2023

Property Magazine of the Year 2022, Property Press Awards

PPA Magazine Brand of the Year 2019

PPA Front Cover of the Year 2018

British Society of Magazine Editors Columnist of the Year (Special Interest) 2016

British Society of Magazine Editors Scoop of the Year 2015/16

PPA Specialist Consumer Magazine of the Year 2014/15

British Society of Magazine Editors Innovation of the Year 2014/15

FUTURE
Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Kevin Li Ying**
Non-Executive Chairman **Mark Brooker**
Chief Financial Officer **Sharjeel Suleman**
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

Editorial

Editor-in-Chief
Mark Hedges

Editor's PA/Editorial Assistant
Bella Fulford 6066

Telephone numbers are prefixed by **0330 390**

Emails are name.surname@futurenet.com

Deputy Editor
Kate Green 4171

Managing & Features Editor
Paula Minchin 07971 923048

Architectural Editor
John Goodall

Gardens Editor
Tiffany Daneff 6115

Executive Editor and Interiors
Giles Kime 6047

Art and Antiques Editor
Carla Passino (carla.passinobargioni@futurenet.com)

News and Property Editor
Julie Harding

Acting Deputy Features Editor
Agnes Stamp

Acting Assistant Features Editor
Emma Hughes

Lifestyle Editor
Will Hosie

Acting Luxury Editor
Amie Elizabeth White 6102

Head of Design
Dean Usher

Senior Art Editor
Emma Earnshaw

Deputy Art Editor
Heather Clark

Senior Designer
Ben Harris

Picture Editor
Lucy Ford 4072

Deputy Picture Editor
Emily Anderson

Chief Sub-Editor
Octavia Pollock 6605

Senior Sub-Editor
Stuart Martel

Digital Director
Toby Keel

Digital Content Director and Travel Editor
Rosie Paterson 6591

Deputy Digital Editor
James Fisher 4058

Digital Writer
Lotte Brundle

Social Media Editor
Florence Allen

Property Correspondent
Penny Churchill

Country Life Picture Library Content & Permissions Executive
Cindie Johnston 6538

Commercial director
Clare Dove

Advertisement director and Classified
Kate Barnfield 07817 629935

Advertising (Property)
Lucy Khosla 07583 106990

International Property/Travel
Scarlett Glendenning 07938 735212

Luxury
Katie Ruocco 07929 364909

Interiors
Emma Hiley 07581 009998

Art & Antiques
Julia Laurence 07971 923054

Advertising and Classified Production
Stephen Turner 6613

Senior Ad Production Manager
Jo Crosby 6204

Inserts Canopy Media
020–4517 1430;
paloma.walder@canopymedia.co.uk

Back issues
www.magazinesdirect.com

To find out more, contact us at licensing@futurenet.com or view our available content at www.futurecontenthub.com

Head of Print Licensing
Rachel Shaw

Circulation Manager
Peter Hilton

Production
Group Production Manager
Nigel Davies

Management
Senior Vice President Women's and Luxury
Hillary Kerr

Business Director
Kelly Gray

Managing Director
Malcolm Young

Printed by Walstead UK

For all your subscription enquiries, please visit:
www.magazinesdirect.com/corporate/contact-us

Julie Harding

A quarter of a century may have passed since the worst outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in British history (the first case was discovered in pigs in an Essex abattoir on February 20, 2001), but the sight of the landscape littered with smouldering pyres, each containing hundreds of dead livestock, still lingers in the memory. By the time of the final case—at Whygill Head Farm in Appleby, Cumbria, on September 30—in excess of six million cattle, sheep, pigs had been slaughtered, with the worst hit counties, which accounted for 75.5% of all outbreaks, being Cumbria (893), Devon (173), Dumfries & Galloway, Scotland (176), North Yorkshire (133), Co Durham (85), Powys, Wales (70), and Northumberland (88). The cost to the public purse was £3 billion and to the private sector £5 billion, but the financial fallout was dwarfed by the personal pain—farmers witnessing the mass culling of animals they had often bred and nurtured for years were pictured weeping beside those pyres, their life's work literally reduced to ashes

New ideas on carbon storage

THE most stable forms of soil carbon in upland grasslands—known as mineral-associated organic carbon (MAOC)—may be reduced by the removal of grazing livestock. Livestock removal has long been thought to act as a carbon booster, making it a valuable tool for climate change, but, although a study led by the University of Manchester has discovered an increase in fast-cycling carbon stored in plants and dead vegetation when animals are removed from upland grasslands, MAOC, which binds to soil minerals, was found in lower levels within the 12 upland grassland sites that were analysed. The lead study author Dr Luhong Zhou states: 'Although high grazing intensity can negatively affect soil carbon, our results show that total grazer exclusion does not necessarily lead to greater long-term soil carbon storage.'

Another study delivering unexpected results is one undertaken by Austria's BOKU University, interpreted by the University of Stirling's Prof Jens-Arne Subke and The James Hutton Institute's Dr Thomas Parker. They argue that the climate benefits of tree planting may have been overstated, as soils beneath woodland could store less carbon than assumed—a factor not fully accounted for in earlier estimates.

> Loose dogs injured or killed farm animals worth £1.95 million in 2025, a rise of 10% on 2024's figures, according to a study by NFU Mutual.

Trees good, sheep better? Studies show that low-intensity grazing locks in carbon

Government urged to accelerate bTB strategy

THE Government's bovine tuberculosis (bTB) strategy is 'floundering' and a solution to the disease, which led to the slaughter of 21,586 cattle in England in 2024, is needed urgently, according to the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the updated Godfray review, which last year made it clear that the 2038 eradication target (announced in 2014) will only be possible with 'a step change in the urgency with which the issue is treated'. NFU president Tom Bradshaw echoed these words recently when he stated: 'There needs to be much greater urgency, attention and investment given to TB eradication.'

Cattle may be vulnerable when the badger cull ends, without a new plan in place

However, the farming sector continues to await confirmation of Defra's newly refreshed strategy, which it has stated it 'hopes' to present this spring. The £18 million Badger Vaccinator Field Force programme is also set to be introduced this year in targeted areas to support core cattle measures, according to a spokesperson, who added: 'While measures aimed at wildlife can be important tools for disease control, cattle testing and surveillance is, and always has been, the foundation of our bovine TB strategy—and we are strengthening those cattle measures even further.' Cattle measures currently include routine and targeted bTB testing of herds, movement restrictions on those found to be infected and rapid detection, removal and slaughter of individual beasts that test positive.

Despite badgers being key spreaders of the *Mycobacterium bovis* bacterium, which causes bTB, the Government has pledged to halt the statistically successful (in terms of lowering incidence of the disease in cattle), but highly controversial programme of badger culls by the end of this parliament. Although culls have been in operation in England since 2013, this year marks the final season of culling in high-risk and edge areas. By January 31, 2027, the programme will have ceased operations in 20 of the 21 active areas, with one licence remaining, in the low-risk area of Cumbria, although this will be subject to annual reviews.

Mr Bradshaw added: 'With the Government ending wildlife control by the end of this parliament and the estimation that cattle vaccinations and associated effective testing won't be available until at least 2030, there are gaping holes in the current policy that put the progress made so far at risk.'

A new study on a potential bulk milk test for bTB is said to be in the pipeline, although few details are currently available.

bTB in numbers

20,623 total number of animals slaughtered in England (October 2024 to September 2025), a decrease of 6% on the previous 12 months

12,493 total number of animals slaughtered in Wales (October 2024–September 2025), where there has been no wildlife control, an increase of 2% on the previous 12 months

Scotland has been officially tuberculosis free since **2009**

Rooting for a rubber revolution

PICKING dandelions is messy, with the oozing white sap enough to put off young garland makers, but pioneering scientists have come up with a way to boost and harvest the latex found in that milky substance. Over the next three years, a Defra-funded project will farm a variety of the yellow plant that grows in Kazakhstan, having gene-edited it to increase the potency of the rubber produced in its roots.

Finding new sources of rubber is important as there is a million-ton global shortfall, according to Neil Clelland of biotechnology company QuberTech. '[As] almost all natural rubber comes from the Hevea tree, which is grown almost exclusively in south-east Asia and west Africa, disease could devastate the plantations,' he says. A 1,080sq ft demonstrator glasshouse will be set up at the John Innes Centre in Norfolk to grow *Taraxacum kok-saghyz* (TKS), the Kazakh dandelion. The top-quality latex produced by the souped-up roots will be suitable for use in everything from trainer soles to surgical equipment and, as the dandelions won't flower or seed, there will be no chance of them naturalising with our native 'wet-the-beds'. *Charlotte Cooper*

Good week for

Online trailblazers
Jawed Karim's 19-second video clip *Me at the zoo* (2005), YouTube's first ever upload that heralded the era of the user-generated video, has been acquired by the V&A Museum

Daffodil hunters
The RHS has relaunched its Daffodil Diaries campaign to map the plants across the country, with a special plea for the eponymous and rare *Narcissus* 'Mrs R. O. Backhouse', the oldest variety with a solid coral-pink trumpet. Email photographs of discoveries to www.rhs.org.uk/science/daffodil-diaries

David Hockney fans

The painter's *English Garden*, a stylised, halcyon view of Haseley Court, Oxfordshire, last home of design doyenne Nancy Lancaster, will be auctioned in Sotheby's March 4 evening sale (estimate £2.5m–3.5m)

England's woodlands
Dedicated deer officers, targeted grants and streamlined licensing are among the measures included in a Government support package designed to help England's landowners, foresters and farmers manage deer more effectively and thus allow their woodlands to flourish

Bad week for

National Gallery staff
The London gallery's £8.2m deficit could lead to fewer free exhibitions and more expensive tickets. Staff are being offered a 'voluntary exit scheme', but future compulsory redundancies haven't been ruled out

Waste criminals
The Environment Agency is using new surveillance, detection and investigative techniques to thwart waste crime, including a 33-strong drone squad to track illegal dumps from the air and a reinforced 20-strong Joint Unit for Waste Crime

Forage-poor livestock owners
Hay and straw prices have soared, with shortages after last summer's drought. Big bale hay is £154 per ton, a rise of £81 on the same week last year; big square baled wheat straw is £95/ton (up almost 36%)

A punk rocker lit up the 2025 Chelsea in Bloom festival

Chichester Cathedral and Chelsea prepare for floral spectacles

CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL'S biennial Festival of Flowers marks its 30th anniversary this year (June 3–6), and once again the 950-year-old West Sussex cathedral will be transformed by floral installations. This time, 60 are the brainchild of local floral artist and festival designer Caroline Daines, whose ideas have been shaped by the theme Nature's Embrace. 'My ideas are influenced by my background in the wedding and events industry, alongside a love of Nature, architecture, art and beautiful spaces,' says Ms Daines, whose ideas will be crafted by more than 100 florists using in excess of 50,000 blooms. The festival has raised more than £1.4 million to date towards the cathedral's upkeep. Tickets cost £21 in advance and can be purchased at www.chichestercathedral.org.uk/events/festival-flowers-2026

Meanwhile, Chelsea in Bloom, which last year saw 1.58 million visitors converge on the west London neighbourhood to view (free of charge) large-scale floral-art installations, will run this year on May 18–24. The theme this time is 'Out of this World', so attendees can expect the area to be transformed into an intergalactic wonderland, with displays inspired by astrology and spiritual symbolism, including, in Sloane Square, SW1, a constellation circle that celebrates the zodiac. For more information, visit www.kingsroad.co.uk

John Singer Sargent's *Study for 'Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose'* (1885) is being auctioned at Christie's London on March 5, with an estimate of £3 million–£5 million. It is a precursor to *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (1885–86; *right*), which shows, in Sargent's own words, 'two little girls in a garden at twilight lighting paper lanterns among the flowers, from rose-tree to rose-tree'. Today, this work is on display at Tate Britain, but the study has been in a private collection. One of three similar works, it shows the right-hand figure of the larger painting, Polly, daughter of Frederick Barnard. They were, like Sargent, staying at the artists' and writers' colony in the Cotswold village of Broadway, where the leading portrait painter worked swiftly *en plein air* during the transient twilight to capture the glow of a summer's evening, with Polly and her sister, Dolly, as models

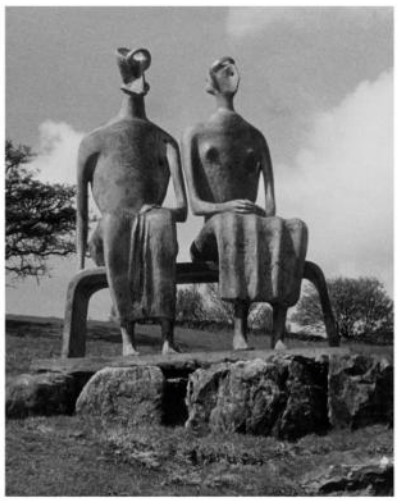
Small dog, big personality

ANYONE with a penchant for dachshunds will enjoy William Quarry's *Travels with Dachshunds*, which explores the breed's history and the key characteristics of these diminutive dogs, including their highly developed sense of hearing, sight and scent. The book is being sold on a not-for-profit basis, with money donated to The Royal (Dick) Veterinary Hospital in Edinburgh and registered Dachshund charities. For more information, email the author, billquarry@gmail.com, who requests a donation of £20 per copy (plus £5 P&P).

Building futures

Further to the Frontispiece featuring Miss Liberty Adam (COUNTRY LIFE, *February 18*), she works on the ground in Shatila Refugee Camp in Beirut, Lebanon, and is the communications officer for Alsama Project. Of the refugees and displaced teenagers who arrive in the project's education centres, 90% are unable to read or write and the charity's programme packs 12 years of education into just six, putting students on the path to university or skilled employment. Miss Adam's parents are William and Lindsay Adam of Canterbury, Kent.

Getty; Alamy; Sotheby's; Sarah Farnsworth/Michael Topham/Country Life Picture Library; Courtesy of the Henry Moore Foundation Todd White Photography



In *King and Queen*, Henry Moore explores the themes of power, intimacy and human presence. In 1954, a year after completing the work, which came about spontaneously when the sculptural titan was experimenting with a piece of modelling wax, art critic Robert Melville termed it the artist's 'finest achievement since the war, and probably the most graceful of all his works'. In private hands for more than 70 years—and first cast as one of four, but with the other three long in major public collections—this seminal work is being offered (estimate £10 million–£15 million) at Christie's London Evening Sale on March 5. Christie's Orlando Rock and Philip Harley say: 'In *King and Queen*, [Moore] navigates the boundary between abstraction and figuration, creating two regal, semi-abstract figures that sit side by side yet remain distinct, their forms subtly echoing one another to convey intimacy without contact… *King and Queen* stands as a defining work of British post-war art and a landmark achievement in Moore's career'

'I wanted to demonstrate what trail-hunting means to everyone, including the animals,' says sculptor Zoë Carmichael, whose bronze *A Red Letter Day* was unveiled at the annual dinner of the British Sporting Art Trust (BSAT) last night (www.bsat.co.uk). Created using the traditional lost-wax casting method, it shows Duke of Beaufort's hunt horse Mickey and hound Pocket, sculpted from life at the Gloucestershire kennels. 'This is living heritage, this is now,' says the artist. Each bronze in the edition of 12 is £11,700, plus VAT, with 10% going to the BSAT (www.zoecarmichael.art)

Labour peers voice hunt support

THE subject of trail-hunting was touched on in the House of Lords earlier this month during a debate on Animal Welfare Strategy: Rural Communities. Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, stated that she thought rural communities are 'more concerned about the fact that they may not have a GP… [or aren't] able to access a dentist' than the ban on trail-hunting. However, Labour peer Baroness Mallalieu questioned: 'If the Government were to persist with their ill-advised commitment to ban lawful trail-hunting, which is not about animal welfare, but about dislike of people, what are their proposals to replace the system for relief of animal suffering?', in reference to hunts' role in livestock dispatch and collection. Baroness Hunter of Auchenreoch (Labour), in turn, warned the Government against being 'insensitive to countryside interests' and 'distracted from their priorities'.

Country Mouse

Battle of Bedlam Bottom

A YEAR ago, I spent a few days on my hands and knees planting a couple of thousand native snowdrops 'in the green'. The result has been worth all the backache—it has been a very good year everywhere for snowdrops, probably because of the dreadful weather. The starting pistol of the gardening year has now been fired, although, having had to spend £3,000 fixing the suspension on our car, some tree planting has been postponed.

Village WhatsApp groups are abuzz with updates on the latest news on their local potholes. Some get mentioned as if they were First World War flying aces: 'The one by the turning to Hickling Lane had two more cars AGAIN before breakfast on Tuesday.' The vanquished vehicles line the verges, with their tyres shot to pieces. Car manufacturers who decided that modern cars wouldn't need a spare tyre in the boot have made a big mistake.

With many potholes having a lifespan lasting years (*see page 34*) due to the local councils choosing not to spend our money repairing them, I wonder if the excellent Ordinance Survey should not be asked to list them on their wonderful maps. Near me, they could have The Bedlam Bottom at Bramdean; The Hades Hole on Hallum Lane and The East Tisted Trench. **MH**

Town Mouse

Champagne tracks

'WELL,' I said, slapping my knees, 'there's something you don't see every day,' thanking Max Richter and taking a swig of Krug Clos d'Ambonnay 2008 as guests craned to spot Pierce Brosnan. James Bond and I were attending a concert at Camden's Roundhouse—a venue better known for punk shows than classical music and Champagne pairings—yet, as this is London in 2026, best to shrug and say: 'Why not?'

Krug had commissioned Mr Richter—who recently earned an Oscar nomination for *Hamnet*—to compose three tracks for the different cuvées served that evening: a boozy kind of synesthesia. Custom-made armchairs in white wool wrapped around the artist and his piano, with a live orchestra to one side. Upstairs on the mezzanine, dinner by Adam Handling awaited. 'It feels as if we're in The Square,' my companion whispered, a nod to Ruben Östlund's 2017 film about art-world excess. 'I know,' I replied. 'I'm loving it.'

To the Old Vic, where less comfortable seating proved no issue during Sir Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*. Although there are many reasons for doom and gloom at the moment, I couldn't help but find Septimus's defence of optimism oddly poignant. In one scene, Thomasina laments the masterpieces that have been lost to the great fire of Alexandria. 'How can we sleep?' she cries. 'By counting our stock,' Septimus replies. **WH**

Town & Country Notebook

Edited by Agnes Stamp

Quiz of the week

1) Of which tribe was Boadicea queen?
2) What is an espresso served with a scoop of ice cream called?
3) Which border did the Treaty of York establish in 1237?
4) The natural acoustics of which famous sea cave inspired Felix Mendelssohn's overture *The Hebrides*?
5) Name the pope responsible for ordering the end of the Knights Templar

Riddle me this

If there are four sheep, two dogs and one shepherd, how many feet are there?

100 years ago in COUNTRY LIFE February 27, 1926

IT is good, in these days of overcrowded factory life, when men and women, working with the roar of turning wheels in their ears and breathing smoke and metallic dust, become part of the machinery they tend, to come across an old-world industry where these things are not, and the slow and quiet methods of long ago still survive. Walk some five or six miles out of Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, and you may find yourself back in the 18th century. Hidden behind some tumble-down cottage you may catch a glimpse of a shed littered with logs and shavings, in which a man works a primitive-looking lathe with his foot. Or better still, you may come across the 'bodgers' in the clearing of a wood. They are men who love the sky better than a factory roof, and thin, smooth trunks of beech trees rather than four enclosing walls. They are their own masters and controlled only by the weather.

1) Iceni 2) Affogato 3) England and Scotland 4) Fingal's Cave, Staffa 5) Pope Clement V. Riddle me this: Two (sheep have hooves; dogs have paws; only people have feet)

The stalwart Scottie

Scottish terrier

HE has a fund of dry wit and plenty of common sense and can be exasperatingly obstinate; in fact, he is a typical Scot,' quipped COUNTRY LIFE in 1957. A close relative of the Cairn terrier, the Scottie's dumpy yet dignified silhouette has become one of Scotland's most famous brands—appearing on shortbread tins, handbags and whisky bottles—as well as being a Monopoly board totem.

A sturdy 'thick-set [dog] suitable to go to ground,' the breed has a strong prey-drive and, 'unless pampered and coddled… possesses a constitution of iron; and a more constant, devoted friend no one ever owned'. Peaking in popularity between 1929 and 1937, the breed has charmed many, including James VI of Scotland and the 4th Earl of Dumbarton (who had a pack called the Diehards). White House residents included Fala, owned by President Roosevelt, Meggie (Eleanor Roosevelt), and Barney and Miss Beazley (George W. Bush). In 2014, a parade of 41 Scotties made an enchanting sight at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

From 'Country Life's Book of Dogs' (Rizzoli, £50)

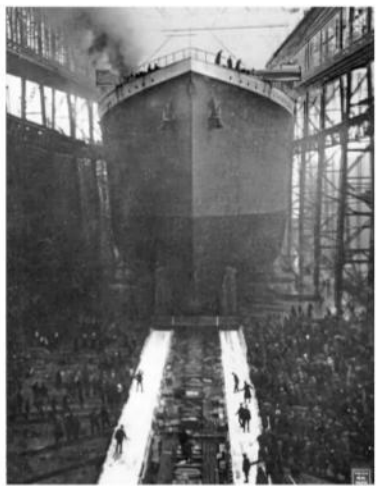
Time to buy

Oak Dog Gate: made-to measure barrier with a customisable engraving, £500, The Oak & Rope Company (01227 469413; www.theoakandropecompany.co.uk)

Artisan Hot Chocolate by Ocelot: velvety 70% dark chocolate infused with notes of blood orange, £14, Pophams Home (www.pophamshome.com)

On this day… February 26, 1914

At 11.10am at the Harland & Wolff shipyard in Belfast, Co Antrim, RMS *Britannic*, the sister ship to RMS *Olympic* and RMS *Titanic*, is launched as the third and final Olympic-class ocean liner. The following year, she would be requisitioned as a hospital ship, eventually striking a naval mine on November 21, 1916, near the Greek island of Kea in the Aegean Sea, becoming the largest vessel to sink during the First World War.



A novel note

'Sometimes their need to please previous generations is greater than their need to love future ones'
The Names, **Florence Knapp**

Poet's corner

'Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light'
Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night, **Dylan Thomas**

Alamy: Chuhail/Dreamstime.com; *Norfolk Goose Fields* by John Hurst, watercolour, 66cm x 57cm, 2025, Private collection; Annabelle King/Future Plc

The taste of Britain
Somerset: Bath buns

IN 1801, Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra of 'disordering my stomach with Bath bunns'. Made with an enriched yeasted dough and topped with crushed sugar (and sometimes caraway seeds), it's easy to see why these French-accented creations might have prompted excessive indulgence among visitors to the spa town. A mass-produced version was sold at the Great Exhibition in 1851, with about a million of them reportedly being snapped up by hungry Londoners. Bath buns were expensive to bake the old-fashioned way, prompting some unscrupulous confectioners to take potentially fatal shortcuts: in 1859, *The Times* reported on 'some poisonous matter used in the composition of Bath buns... which nearly cost the lives of six young gentlemen' in Bristol. When they were 'seized with violent sickness' after eating them, some buns from the same batch were examined; they contained 'chromate of lead, which was used as a cheap substitute for eggs'. This did not dent the buns' popularity: in 1955, COUNTRY LIFE reported that 'the Bath bun still survives in all its glorious stickiness'. *EH*

Illustration by Kateryna Kyslitska

Wine o'clock

Coconut cream

Wildeberg, Coterie Semillon-Sauvignon Blanc, Coastal Region, South Africa, 2023. £12.95–£14.95, Booths, Cheers, Lekker Wines, Talking Wines, alc 12%

Waxy, intense barrel-fermented Semillon leads the way, with the 20% unoaked (but long lees-aged) Sauvignon Blanc bringing aromatic zing and brightness. Exotic notes of coconut cream, lemongrass and pineapple complete the picture.

Visit www.decanter.com

Time for tea

Japanese sencha (*sen-cha*)

Japan's green teas are the first whisper of spring. From now, as frost lingers in the tea gardens, the nation begins *ichibancha*, the opening harvest. Pruners move through rows of jade leaves, steaming machinery hums into life and the hint of sea mist drifts inland. Tea was introduced to Japan from China in the 9th century by Buddhist monks seeking 'still alertness'. By the 18th century, growers in Kyoto and Shizuoka had refined classic forms such as sencha and gyokuro, teas of grass-and-sea fresh character. These leaves are steamed rather than pan-fired, giving their liquor a vibrant green quiver, a sweet-savoury umami note and an unmistakably clear profile.

How to serve

Allow one teaspoon per cup and steep in hot water (about 80°C) for 1–2 minutes. Never use boiling water, it dulls the freshness.

Where to buy

Clearspring sells 90g of organic loose-leaf Japanese sencha for £7.49 (0300 373 1919; www.clearspring.co.uk)

Jonathon Jones tastes tea and exports English-grown tea worldwide

Unmissable events

February 26 'Creating A Romantic English Country Garden with Isabel & Julian Bannerman', online course. Within the wild charm of Ashington Manor in Somerset, the renowned designers share the art of creating free-spirited gardens in their first short-format video course (www.createacademy.com)

March 1–22 'Cley. Now and Then. A Watercolour Story' (*pictured*), Norfolk Wildlife Trust Cley and Salthouse Marshes Visitor Centre, Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk. This exhibition by local artist John Hurst is both a centenary celebration and retrospective glimpse into the changing landscape and ecology of north Norfolk's coastline (01263 740008; www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

March 7 Creative Vegetables: Vegetarian Cooking Class, Le Cordon Bleu, Bloomsbury Square, London WC1. Master a variety of sophisticated meat-free recipes and learn how to enhance the flavours of unusual ingredients (020–7400 3900; www.cordonbleu.edu)

March 7 and 14 Four Seasons of Hitchcock talks and screenings, Pictureville Cinema, The National Science and Media Museum, Bradford, West Yorkshire. Join podcaster Rebecca McCallum as she shares her perspective on the director's work before a screening of one of his legendary films (0330 058 0058; www.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk)

March 21 National Spring Show, Kelsall Hill Equestrian Centre, Tarporley, Cheshire. Attracting admirers from around the globe, the Shire Horse Society's new event will see these magnificent gentle giants shown in-hand (01536 771611; www.shire-horse.org.uk)

Will Hosie

Longevity? I think farmers invented that...

IS it healthier to live in the country? So ran a BBC headline back in 2017 after new research suggested that living near major roads could increase one's risk of dementia. Both air and noise pollution were cited as a possible cause: tiny particles, studies found, were getting into the brain. The countryside was heralded as a potential exit strategy ('less than a quarter of the UK population lives there for a start,' the Beeb gushed) and, since then, a number of Arcadian health retreats have sprung up across our green and pleasant land, catering to burnt-out or simply health-conscious city mice keen to recharge their batteries somewhere where they can see the stars.

To rest and relaxation, today's power-brokers raise us longevity. No longer the sole preserve of elderly care, the L-word now compasses a market projected to be worth $27 trillion (£19.99 trillion) by 2030, with major investments into technologies designed to extend our time on Earth.

Green for go: a life in the leafy countryside can contribute to longevity, and be a salve for those suffering anxiety and depression

Longevity has come to dominate both our medical and hospitality spheres. 'Have you noticed,' one friend asked, 'how many London spas have rebranded as longevity labs?' The presidential suite of Fitzrovia's Newman hotel, W1, has both a sauna and a cold plunge on its balcony. Meditation, sound baths and infrared therapy are no longer the accoutrements of the lifestyle guru alone, but also of the corporate stooge.

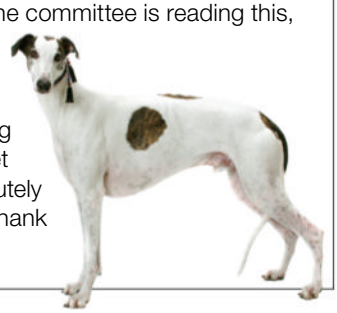
Yet all this is to ignore the true ingredients of longevity: Nature and togetherness. In Scotland, GPs regularly prescribe time in the great outdoors for those suffering from anxiety and depression: a greener life tends to beget a longer one. In Somerset and along the coast of Ireland, community saunas encourage strangers to forge friendships as they sweat it out together: a reminder that life is a lot more enjoyable with other people in it.

The longevity-industrial complex has tricked us into two false beliefs. The first is that we are dependent on devices to improve the very conditions that technology tends to worsen (stress, sleep, hypertension). The health-tech industry, projected to reach $700 billion by 2030, rarely does more than repackage time-old ideas as radical breakthroughs. Many of longevity's principles—rise with the sun, eat organic, touch grass—are more or less the same as those which country folk have followed for centuries.

The second false belief is that longevity is a solo pursuit. I have always loved the statistic that loneliness kills more people each year than cigarettes, not because death is ever jolly, but because it recognises that companionship is equally as important as fitness. Why would anyone want to live forever if they're to live forever, alone? The Romans, after all, spoke of *carpe diem*, not *carpe vitam*.

Put your trust in me

I found out last week that you don't always need to give something up for Lent: you can also take something on. 'I think that's a great idea,' my mother said. 'I assume you'll be taking up sports?' Not a chance: a colleague has introduced me to The Cinnamon Trust, a charity that supports elderly or terminally ill patients by matching them with volunteers to take care of their pets. I have duly applied, naming my colleague James Fisher as reference number one and my old flatmate —whose German shorthaired pointer, Molly, is among my favourite creatures in the world (*Frontispiece, June 18, 2025*)—as reference number two. The Cinnamon Trust's application system is notoriously stringent. I suppose this is a good thing, although I'll never quite live it down if they say 'thanks, but no thanks'. If anyone on the committee is reading this, I implore you: say yes. I'm really good with dogs. Especially greyhounds. And I'm relying on them to help me get in shape as I am absolutely not taking up sports, thank you very much.



What you might have *missed*

When my colleague Bella Fulford was 14, she and her mother lived at the end of a four-mile dead-end lane in Oxfordshire. 'Mum was so annoyed with the number of undealt-with potholes on our road that she went out and documented every single one with a tape measure and sent letters of her findings to the council.' They took two years to fix them. Potholes continue to blight the countryside. In 2024, guerilla gardener Harry Smith-Haggett made headlines after he filled these with flowers, soil and plants, protesting inefficiency and alerting drivers to their presence. Noble, yes, but ultimately fruitless. Perhaps we ought to find a corporate sponsor instead?

In the US, Domino's (yes, the pizza brand) has previously stepped into this role, paving over potholes in various states for an advertising campaign in 2018. Takeaway customers were always complaining that their order was cold, because delivery drivers were having to slow down their journey due to badly maintained roads.

I wonder who our equivalent benefactor could be. Morleys, perhaps? Or Daylesford?

William Gray/AWL Images Ltd; Alamy

VIKING
Exploring the World in Comfort®

2026-2027 Worldwide Ocean Journeys

Eight-day journeys from £1,995pp

Explore the world in depth, and at a relaxed pace. The small size of our elegant, 930-passenger ships* gives you access to fascinating ports that larger ships cannot reach. Every detail on board a Viking ship is designed to enrich and enhance your travel experience. And every stateroom has a view, and a veranda from which to enjoy it. Scandinavia and Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Americas and Caribbean, Asia, Australia and New Zealand – our ocean and world voyages traverse six continents. And you can trust that your Viking ocean voyage is a great-value package, with everything you need included. Come and discover why Viking was voted number one for oceans at the Condé Nast Traveller 2025 Readers' Choice Awards, Best Boutique Ocean Cruise Line at the 2025 Telegraph Travel Awards and Best Luxury Ocean Cruise Operator at the 2025 Times and Sunday Times Travel Awards. Start planning your journey today.

Viking Inclusive Value

- Return economy scheduled flights from London and selected regional airports at no extra cost
- Stateroom with a private veranda
- All onboard meals, including regional specialities
- Beer, wine and soft drinks with onboard lunch and dinner
- Tea, coffee and snacks any time on board
- One shore excursion in almost every port of call, led by a knowledgeable local guide
- Enrichment lectures and destination performances
- Free Wi-Fi on board**
- Onboard gratuities
- 24-hour room service
- Access to top-rated spa and fitness centre

TO REQUEST A FREE BROCHURE SCAN THE QR CODE, CALL US ON 020 8780 6537 OR VISIT VIKING.COM

*Some Viking ocean ships can host 998 guests. **Connection speed may vary. Price and availability are correct at the time of going to print but are subject to change. From price is per person and is based on a 11 January 2027 departure date on an 8-day *Iberian Explorer* ocean journey. From prices are per person based on double occupancy. For full terms and conditions and the most up to date pricing information, please visit viking.com.

WINNER THE TRAVEL AWARDS 2025 BEST LUXURY OCEAN CRUISE OPERATOR

Condé Nast Traveller READERS' CHOICE AWARDS 2025

The Telegraph TRAVEL AWARDS 2025 WINNER

ABTA ABTA No.V924X

Letters to the Editor

Mark Hedges

Letter of the week

What rubbish!

LAST week, I drove from my home in East Sussex to Bracknell in Berkshire. It was one of the most depressing journeys of my life. From the roundabout onto the M23 right through to my destination, the quantity of litter all along the roadside was utterly disgusting—boiling rage and utter heartbreak overwhelmed me.

What does this say about us as a nation? There are so many problems in the world today about which we can do nothing, but we can do something about this. No politics, no division. Public and private sector, companies and individuals, young and old working together.

Elizabeth Buchanan, East Sussex

The writer of the letter of the week will win a bottle of Pol Roger Brut Réserve Champagne

Bath time

THE people of the Iron Age would take issue with Will Hosie's assertion that Bath's hot springs (*above*) were discovered by the Romans (*Stuff & nonsense*, *January 28*). Perhaps I could quote from my book, *The Dream of Bath*: 'No wonder that the Celtic peoples who lived on the high green hills above the valley of the mists called it sacred, and believed that in the place of the hot springs dwelt the goddess Sul.' Hence the Roman name for Bath, *Aquae Sulis*. In 850BC, the young Prince Bladud, thought to be suffering from leprosy, was banished from Court and lived by tending a herd of pigs. They also began to suffer from his own sores, yet when they came to the place in the valley that never froze and wallowed in the warm mud, he found the lesions on their skin were healing. He, too, bathed in the hot springs, and was cured. When he became king, Bath became a sacred place of healing.

Diana Winsor, Cheltenham

Cautionary tale

I READ with interest Emma Hughes's article on AI (*'Artificial sweeteners'*, *January 14*). In 1953, Roald Dahl (*right*) published a short story on artificial intelligence's impact on the literary world titled, in typical Dahl style, *The Great Automatic Grammatizator*. It concerns a man who programs a computer with all of mankind's literary works. The machine's output causes the demise of publishing houses, authors and would-be authors. The story ends with the line: 'Give us strength, oh Lord, to let our children starve'.

Jerry Lucey, Essex

Christmas every day

IN your December 11/18, 2019, issue, Mark Griffiths wrote an interesting article about the origin of poinsettias. 'Poinsettia is not a puppy; it really is just for Christmas,' he said. I have one that is 18 months old and has been flowering non stop since July. I think my keeping the article was something to do with my late mother-in-law, who insisted that December was not the natural time for poinsettias to flower and refused ever to buy one.

Jill Saxton, by email

Home run

YOUR piece on Halsdon House in Devon (*Property market*, *February 11*), the former home of Charlie Watts (*right*) and his family, briefly mentioned the Furse family. They had been owners of the property for 300 years and could claim a distinguished history, among them an artist, a poet and a sculptor. They were related to Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Laurence Whistler and Sir Henry Newbolt, who wrote of the property: 'The house has something about it which pleases me particularly—an air of never having had too much money spent on it.... like the houses I remember in my childhood when people weren't so obtrusively rich and never furnished a house like a hotel.'

Hugh Meller, Devon

Contact us (photographs welcome)

Email: countrylife.letters@futurenet.com

Post: Country Life, 121–141, Westbourne Terrace, Paddington, London, W2 6JR

We regret that we are unable to respond to letters submitted by post

Future Publishing reserves the right to edit and to reuse in any format or medium submissions to the letters page of Country Life

If you wish to get in touch about your Country Life subscription, including regarding changes of address, please visit www.magazinesdirect.com/corporate/contact-us

Country Life (ISSN 0045-8856, USPS XXXXX) is published 51 times a year, with a double issue in December, by Future plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn NY 11256. Postmaster: Send address changes to Future plc, c/o World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150–15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Country Life Subscriptions: For enquiries and orders, email: help@magazinesdirect.com, alternatively from the UK call: 0330 333 1120, overseas call: + 44 330 333 1120 (Lines are open Monday–Saturday, 8am- 6pm GMT excluding Bank Holidays). One-year full subscription rates: 1 Year (51) issues. UK £259; Europe/Eire €513 (delivery 3–5 days); USA $580 (delivery 5–12 days); Rest of World £446 (delivery 5–7 days). Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing Ltd, Rockwood House, 9–16, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 3DH. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent. If you are an active subscriber, you have access to back issues through your iOS or Android devices. You will only be able to access the digital back issues as long as you are an active subscriber. To buy single back issues (print format) visit: magazinesdirect.com ('Single issues' tab) or email: help@magazinesdirect.com For help call: +44(0)330 333 1113. Lines are open Mon- Fri 8.30am-7pm; Sat 10am-3pm UK time. Magazinesdirect.com is owned and operated by Future Publishing Limited. We regret we cannot be liable for the safe custody or return of any solicited or unsolicited material, whether typescripts, photographs, transparencies, artwork or computer discs. Country Life Picture Library: Articles and images published in this and previous issues are available, subject to copyright, from the Country Life Picture Library: 01252 555090/2/3.

Editorial Complaints: We work hard to achieve the highest standards of editorial content and we are committed to complying with the Editors' Code of Practice (https://www.ipso.co.uk/IPSO/cop.html) as enforced by IPSO. If you have a complaint about our editorial content, you can email us at complaints@futurenet.com or write to Complaints Manager, Future Publishing Limited Legal Department, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, W2 6JR. Please provide details of the material you are complaining about and explain your complaint by reference to the Editors' Code. We will try to acknowledge your complaint within five working days and we aim to correct substantial errors as soon as possible.

Getty; Alamy

Badger set

IN response to the letter 'Remembering Badger' in your October 8, 2025, issue, which has just reached me here in Australia, here is our Badger (*above*), a rescue kelpie/heeler cross. Like his late Bedfordshire namesake, he, too, is blind, having lost both eyes to glaucoma at five, but he soldiers on with one false eye and an empty socket. Although his days of ball chasing and beach swims are gone, his tail still wags. Now 13, he busily sniffs his way around the local park, navigating the pathways by the feel through his paws, undeterred by the occasional low-speed bump into trees and other, uncomprehending, dogs. He has become a lightning rod for kindness, drawing warm greetings from his many human friends, all eager to know: 'How are you today, Badger?'

Paul Lyons, Australia

Brown in town

I WONDER if any other COUNTRY LIFE readers spotted a dead woodcock on London's Jermyn Street, SW1, on Monday, February 16? I was rather mystified as to how it might have arrived there, but eventually concluded it might have fallen off the back of a Fortnum & Mason delivery van.

Neal Davies, by email

COUNTRY LIFE
MARCH 4

Meet the soaraway successes in British bird life, from the goldfinch to the glossy ibis. Plus what sort of wedding guest are you, stout walking sticks, Elizabethan maps, Cheltenham, spring onions, hepaticas and Paddington

Vote for the countryside

COUNTRY people in much of England will now have a chance to vote in May. The Government, following new legal advice, is not now delaying local elections while it completes local-government reorganisation. This means that many elections will be for councils that will have only a year of life. The two-tier system of district councils and counties, which still covers much of rural England, is to be replaced by single authorities. These new authorities will not necessarily be county wide, although Agromenes has already recommended that as the best choice. Reorganisation should be centred on the single historic county, as has already proved successful in Cornwall and Wiltshire. We should not split counties into the two or more all-through councils that some local councillors have demanded—usually for reasons of safeguarding their own positions and party-political advantage.

> 'Ignore party labels and go for candidates we can trust to fight for rural England'

At the same time, the Government wants to extend devolution by having more elected mayors with powers similar to those held in areas such as London, the West Midlands or Manchester. In deploying these greater powers, the mayors will cover more than one of the single councils. For example, Suffolk and Norfolk will have a mayor covering both counties and, therefore, whatever number of new councils emerge after reorganisation.

As this complex change is under way, councils all over England will have to organise elections for the old authorities, despite the fact that they will soon disappear. In the North-West, Lancashire will hold seven such elections and in the far East of England, Suffolk County Council and Ipswich Borough Council will go to the polls—all knowing that they will be replaced within the year and new elections held. There will then be a second round of elections for the mayor. The only saving will be that the police commissioners' powers will be subsumed by the mayors and a separate election for them will, therefore, no longer take place.

It is going to be difficult and expensive to put all the arrangements for these elections in place at the same time as the existing authorities have to plan the transition to the new arrangements. It will be even more difficult to get people to vote for such short-lived councils. The turn-out in local council elections is usually low in any case, so, in these peculiar circumstances, the political parties will all have their work cut out to get their supporters to the polls.

As things stand, it's not a good time for politics. The Labour Party has been a great disappointment, even to its most determined supporters. Policies towards farming, trail-hunting and rural pubs have made the party particularly disliked in the countryside. The Conservatives are not much better placed, with memories of the administrations of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss still fresh in voters' minds. Oddly enough, the Liberal Democrats, although not loathed in the same way, have failed to make the breakthrough in popularity that might have been expected. The Greens did well in recent rural elections, but they now seem to have exchanged their environmental programme for an extreme-left economic agenda that has little appeal to hard-pressed farmers and country people. This leaves Reform, an urban party with no understanding nor claim on the countryside.

What, then, should we do? These short-lived councils are important precisely because they will play a big part in determining the way that England will be governed locally in future. Country people will have to gather support around candidates who clearly have the countryside at heart. We are going to have to ignore the party labels and go for the individual candidates that we can trust to fight for rural England. Above all, we must go out and vote.

Athena
Cultural Crusader

We must confront the neglect of Parliament

EARLIER this month, yet another report on the renovation of the Palace of Westminster in London was published. For almost the past seven decades—since the repair of bomb damage to the House of Commons after the Second World War (*'There's no place like home', October 29, 2025*)—Parliament has repeatedly baulked at the cost and inconvenience of properly maintaining its home, a complex architectural palimpsest with a history stretching back a millennium to the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042–66). As this latest report generously expresses it: 'The requirement to avoid significant disruption to the business of Parliament has often resulted in underlying issues in the building not being fully addressed. Continuing in the same way is unsustainable, and will lead to an expensive managed decline.'

The cumulative impact of this neglect is sobering. According to the report, it currently costs about £1.5 million every week to maintain and repair the Palace and reactive maintenance is increasing sharply. In the past month, there has been a heating failure, plus significant problems with the sewerage system, the compelled closure of lavatories and leaks. Since 2016, there have been 36 fires, 12 'asbestos incidents' and 19 falls of masonry. To compound these, the report states that only 12% of the Palace's total floor area has step-free access. Four possible remedies are set out in the report, but only two are recommended. The cheapest involves decanting Parliament entirely from the Palace for 19–24 years and is expected to cost between £8.5 billion and £11.5 billion. Athena imagines, however, that peers and MPs will go for the alternative, a partial decampment costing between £11.8 billion and £18.7 billion and lasting between 38 and 61 years. Every year of delay will reportedly cost an additional £70 million per year in maintenance at present prices and an additional £250 million to £350 million in inflationary rises.

> 'Athena struggles to believe that these vast sums and timescales are necessary'

Athena struggles to believe that these vast sums and timescales are accurate reflections of what is actually necessary. Peers and MPs need to interrogate this report carefully and work out what the project ought to cost. That said, they also need to bite the bullet and get on with the work. After all, the money they waste in dithering is ours. She would also warn against those who have used these costs to argue that the Palace of Westminster should be abandoned in favour of a new Parliament building. Even viewed from a narrowly financial perspective, it's hard to see this being a cheap or easy option. Certainly, the necessary building and infrastructure will be vastly expensive. Nor are the precedents propitious. The proposed budget for the Scottish Parliament in 1998 was £90 million, but the final bill for the—delayed—building in 2004 was £414 million. In today's values, that's three-quarters of £1 billion. No less significant is the fact that it will leave the Palace itself neglected and requiring both repair and a function.

The way we were Photographs from the COUNTRY LIFE archive

1960 **Unpublished**

Lundy Gannet in the harbour at Bideford, Devon. Built in Hull, this trawler was converted into a freight and passenger ferry for Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel in 1956. It could carry 12 people. The men and women standing on the quay with luggage are presumably travellers waiting to board.

Every week for the past 125 years, COUNTRY LIFE has documented and photographed many walks of life in Britain. More than 250,000 of the images are available for syndication or purchase in digital format. To view the archives, visit **www.countrylifeimages.co.uk** and email enquiries to **licensing@futurenet.com**

Country Life Picture Library

1750

SWAINE

LONDON

SWAINE ADENEY TRUNKMAKERS 1750

BRIGG UMBRELLAS 1836

HERBERT JOHNSON HATTERS 1889

RAYNE LONDON SHOEMAKERS 1885

Iconic British craftsmanship, handmade for town & country.

127 New Bond Street, London | www.swaine.london

My favourite painting Baroness Jan Royall

Dame Mit Blumen by Hélène de Beauvoir

***Dame Mit Blumen*, 1965, watercolour and ink, 19½in by 13¾in, by Hélène de Beauvoir (1910–2001), Somerville College, Oxford**

Baroness Jan Royall was principal of Somerville College, Oxford, from 2017–25. She is chair of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions

'Hélène de Beauvoir's striking *Dame Mit Blumen* hung on my office wall at Somerville–a generous gift from an alumna to the college. I was captivated the moment I saw it: the colours, the emotional resonance, the expressive abstraction. The painting embodies themes central to de Beauvoir's work–femininity, resilience and Nature–rendered through her signature fluid forms and a rich palette that evokes both warmth and melancholy. The central figure, poised between strength and vulnerability, reflects her unwavering commitment to feminist ideals. That her values and concerns resonate so deeply with my own makes the painting especially meaningful. As an activist and radical, passionately engaged with social justice and environmental issues, de Beauvoir's presence at Somerville feels not only appropriate, but profoundly affirming'

Charlotte Mullins comments on *Dame Mit Blumen*

HELÈNE DE BEAUVOIR was raised in Paris, France. As a child, she would create the illustrations for the stories of her older sister Simone. As adults, they would both become resolute feminists, with Simone writing *The Second Sex* in 1949 and Hélène running a refuge for victims of domestic violence in her later years. She signed her name 'H de Beauvoir' to escape sexism in art: as she said: 'It is a macho world in which only men are taken seriously. The great painters have always had wives beside them who would handle the daily chores… We... have no wives to support us. Worse yet, our painting is seen as a hobby.'

Supported by her sister, de Beauvoir held her first exhibition in 1936 at the Galerie Jacques Bonjean in Paris. Pablo Picasso attended the opening, praising her work as 'original', and reviews found her canvases 'personal and forceful'. She adopted a Cubist style for her oil paintings, with elements of Futurist energy and Orphist colour. Her watercolours of European scenes, views and memories are more spare. *Dame Mit Blumen* depicts a woman gracefully moving across the paper, flowers blooming all around her. The suggestion of an ochre leg and jacket behind her viridian coat implies she may not be alone in the garden. As with all de Beauvoir's paintings, this watercolour veers towards abstraction, allowing us to interpret the bursts of colour freely.

Courtesy of Amar Gallery, Copyright APP, Ute Achhammer; Roger Harris Photography

FAVOURBROOK

16 & 17 PALL MALL, LONDON SW1

www.favourbrook.com

‘It is a privilege to look after something so ancient when so many antique places have been damaged in wars’

Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire

A glimpse of Nineveh

JAMES HERVEY-BATHURST holds a small Assyrian bas-relief in gypsum, almost certainly from Ashurbanipal’s North Palace at Nineveh (Mosul, Iraq) and probably carved in about 645BC. It shows a beardless eunuch waving to introduce a bearded figure. Charles, 3rd Earl Somers, who inherited Eastnor in 1852, travelled widely in the Near East and was one of the sponsors of the excavations at Nineveh and Nimrud by Henry Layard from 1845–51. It is thought that this panel and another larger tablet still in the house—showing Chaldean or Babylonian prisoners—were a present from Layard for his support.

The tablet resurfaced, together with letters from Layard to Lord Somers, after an Eastnor cellar was cleared of an old cooking range. Other Assyrian bas-reliefs from the excavations went to the British Museum and Canford Manor, Dorset—now a school—once the home of Mary Guest, Layard’s wife. The latter was reputedly rediscovered in the school tuck shop. ‘I visited Mosul in 1972,’ observes Mr Hervey-Bathurst. ‘It is a privilege to look after something so ancient from a famous site when so many antique places have been damaged in recent wars. I wonder if anyone will treasure a fragment from our house in 2,500 years time—very unlikely, unless, of course, it happens to be this Assyrian bas-relief.’ *JG*

Visit www.eastnorcastle.co.uk

Photographs by Phil Barker

Legacy of the aesthete bachelor

The acquisition of houses by the National Trust from the 1930s had less to do with the impoverishment of aristocratic families than the industrial wealth of bachelor donors, as **Michael Hall** reveals

Fig 1 above: **The main living space of The Homewood, Surrey, completed in 1939 and one of the first and most complete Modernist houses in Britain. It was designed by the architect Patrick Gwynne for his parents, who had previously lived in a Victorian house nearby.** *Fig 2 right:* **The architect photographed by COUNTRY LIFE in the kitchen in 1993. This interior was modernised by him in the 1970s**

GIVEN the scale and fame of the National Trust, it is surprising that it hasn't attracted more attention from historians. The last authoritative overview of its story, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, by Dame Jennifer Jenkins, was published more than 30 years ago, in the run-up to the organisation's centenary in 1995. The absence of an up-to-date history may help to explain a number of misconceptions about the Trust's origins and purposes. For example, according to its present director-general, Hilary McGrady, in an interview with *The Times* last year, 'we are more generally known for our houses, but the Trust was founded to give access to Nature'. This overlooks the fact that the organisation's original name, which it has never abandoned, is 'The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty' and that as early as 1907 it owned no fewer than 26 historic houses.

> 'Such men were part of a cultural phenomenon, "the cult of the manor house"'

A second misconception concerns the acceleration of the Trust's acquisition of historic buildings after it decided in the 1930s to focus on country houses. There is a belief that it immediately became the grateful recipient of estates that had been inherited by aristocrats unable to pay their tax bills. In fact, for the first 15 years of what it referred to as the Country Houses Scheme, the pace was set by a very different sort of owner: a bachelor man who had bought a historic house, restored it, furnished it with his collections, laid out a garden and wanted to secure its future. Unlike most owners of ancestral houses, such men could afford to give the Trust the substantial financial endowments that it required in return for accepting these buildings in perpetuity.

The role of bachelors in the Trust's acquisitions of historic houses is documented in the diaries kept between 1942 and 1949 by James Lees-Milne when he was working for the Trust's Country Houses Committee (renamed the Historic Buildings Committee in 1945). Dogged in his pursuit of houses for his employer, he was also quizzical about the men who were offering them to him. Bisexual, with a bias towards his own sex, he was especially alert to any signs of sexual heterodoxy. A vivid example is his record of the visit he paid in September 1945 to Lindisfarne Castle, Northumberland ***(Fig 3)***. The building had been bought as a ruin by COUNTRY LIFE's proprietor, Edward Hudson, →

Fig 3: **The entrance hall of Lindisfarne Castle, Northumberland, given to the Trust by merchant banker and bachelor Edward de Stein**

who commissioned Edwin Lutyens to restore it. The result is such a compelling example of the Arts-and-Crafts taste that the magazine promoted that it is often forgotten how the castle came into the hands of the Trust. In 1921, Hudson sold it to a London stockbroker, Oswald Falk, from whom it was bought eight years later by a merchant banker, Edward de Stein (1887–1965). It was he who invited Lees-Milne to Lindisfarne to discuss his offer of the castle to the Trust.

As this suggests, De Stein was public spirited, yet, although he was a poet, a collector of porcelain and a skilled embroiderer, he did not appeal to Lees-Milne, who wrote that he was 'a peppery, fussy, schoolmasterish little man, with whom I should hate to have a row'. Lees-Milne was curious about his host's domestic arrangements. De Stein was a bachelor, who resided with an older unmarried sister, Gladys, but she was not there when Lees-Milne visited; instead, De Stein was accompanied by a much younger male friend. Lees-Milne thought him 'rather nice', unlike De Stein, who 'is prudish and disapproving, yet he puts his arm round one's waist and makes rapid, sly remarks which I think it best to leave unheeded'. Nonetheless, the gift was accepted, subject to a right for De Stein and his sister to remain as tenants.

In one case, the bachelor owner of a house was so taken with Lees-Milne that he thought of bequeathing it to him rather than the Trust.

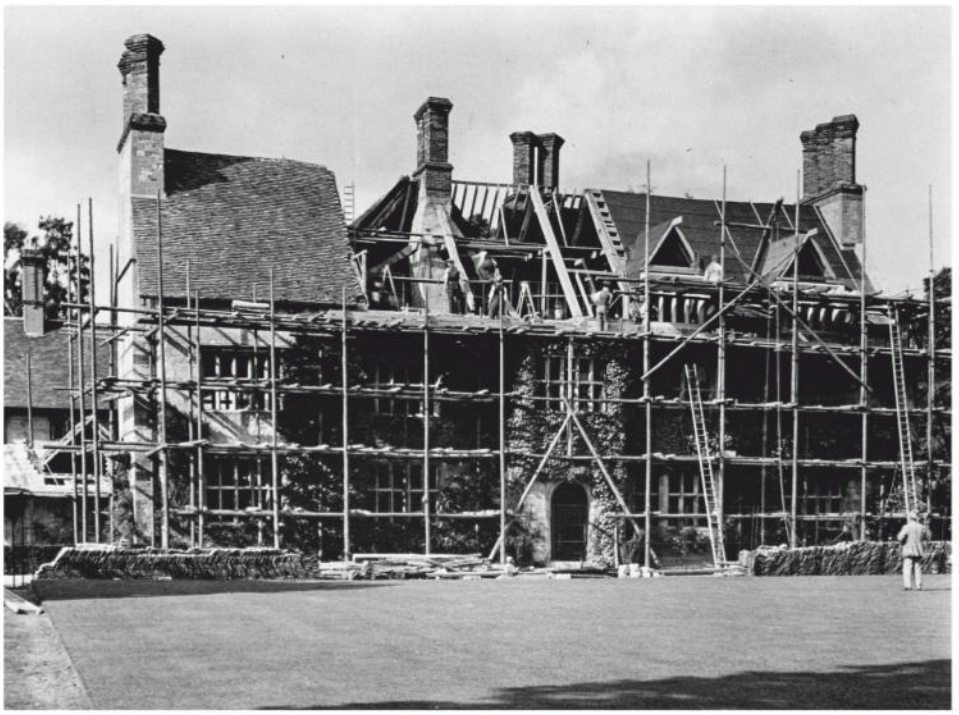


Fig 4 above: **Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire, in the process of transformation in 1926–27.** *Fig 5 right:* **Urban Huttleston Broughton, 1st Lord Fairhaven, photographed at Anglesey Abbey wearing leather riding breeches and long gaiters**

Edgar—'Ted'—Lister (1873–1956) was the owner of Westwood Manor, near Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, a manor house of great beauty with 15th-century origins, which he had bought in 1911. The son of a prosperous Liverpool businessman, he had worked in the diplomatic service, from which he retired in 1918 to devote himself to the restoration of the house and the creation of its garden. He lived there alone, pursuing his hobbies of music—he played the harp—and embroidery. Lees-Milne's marriage in 1951 put an end to the idea that Lister might might bequeath the house to him, but his enthusiasm for Westwood—'every time I come here I am overwhelmed by the perfection of this house'—undoubtedly swayed Lister's decision to give it to the Trust.

Men such as Lister were part of a cultural phenomenon in early-20th-century England that has been called 'the cult of the manor house', an enthusiasm for buying and restoring small houses, ideally Tudor or Jacobean, that were believed to embody national identity in the form of a settled rural social order centred on the squirearchy. This was an ideal that Lees-Milne embraced wholeheartedly, yet it is one to which these donors stand at an angle in terms of class, since the money they brought to the task had usually been newminted in industry and commerce. Their unmarried, childless family circumstances may be one other reason why Lees-Milne was so ready to apply the term 'fake' to their much-restored houses, implying that they were sexual, as well as architectural impostors.

The pioneer of this tradition was Frank Green (1861–1954), who in 1930, well before Lees-Milne joined the Trust, made a gift of Treasurer's House in York and its contents—it was the first time the Trust had been given a fully furnished house ***(Fig 6)***. Green's money came from the family business, the manufacture of heat exchangers. In youth, he was an elegant dandy: according to one young friend, Daphne Vivian, later Marchioness of Bath, 'women's clothes interested him and he made a habit of going to dress shows in London and Paris. He wore all sorts of elegant and eccentric clothes himself', but by the time Lees-Milne knew him he was famous largely for his ferocious temper and threats of physical violence to anyone who moved any of the house's furnishings.

The quality of fastidious perfection at Treasurer's House, where the rooms seem to radiate a sense of 'do not touch', is shared by Packwood House, set in the Warwickshire countryside between Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon. Sixteenth-century in origin, it was heavily restored, decorated and furnished to create a romantic vision of Old →

Fig 6: **The Blue Drawing Room in the Treasurer's House, York, in 2000, when it had just been returned to its pre-1930s colour scheme**

England by Graham Baron Ash ***(Fig 7)***—'Baron' was a Christian name, not a title—who discovered the house when he was in his teens. In 1905, his father, Alfred, who ran the family's Birmingham zinc-manufacturing business, purchased Packwood on his son's behalf, helped him to furnish it and left it to him 20 years later. Ash (1889–1980) then liquidated his stake in the family firm and devoted himself to completing the restoration of the house, to which he added a great hall ***(Fig 8)***.

In 1940, Ash offered Packwood to the Trust with such a generous endowment—£30,000—that the organisation accepted a building that Lees-Milne thought 'more a fake than not'. Ash was more emollient than Green, but he, too, insisted that the Trust must not change anything in the house. Nothing, it seemed, must be allowed to dislodge the carefully contrived image that Green and Ash projected to the world as guardians of these examples of England's heritage of old buildings and decorative arts. Since neither left any records that throw light on their private lives, it is only possible to guess at the psychological dynamics that were concealed behind these immaculately maintained architectural masks.

In 1943, Urban Huttleston Broughton, 1st Lord Fairhaven ***(Fig 5)***, invited Lees-Milne to Anglesey Abbey ***(Fig 4)***, a few miles outside of Cambridge, to discuss his proposed gift of the estate to the Trust. Fairhaven (1896–1966) was the richest of all these bachelor donors thanks to the immense fortune made by his maternal grandfather, the American oil baron Henry Huttleston Rogers. However, Lees-Milne was not impressed by the way that he had remodelled the Tudor house, writing in 1943 that it was 'like Packwood, more a fake than not'. Fairhaven's reputation has never recovered from Lees-Milnes's mockery, as in the account of dinner at Anglesey Abbey, where he 'is served first, before his guests, in the feudal manner which only the son of an oil magnate would adopt'.

One reason why this snobbish dismissal has proved so enduring is the absence of

documents that might provide alternative insights into Lord Fairhaven's private life. His diaries vanished shortly after his death and are believed to have been destroyed by his family, with the result that visitors have been left to draw their own conclusions from the prominence of sculptures and paintings of nude young men in the house's collections.

By the time the National Trust inherited Anglesey Abbey, it was well provided with country houses and estates of the traditional type. Nonetheless, the stream of gifts and bequests by bachelors continued, and indeed had been enlarged to encompass gardens, with the gift in 1948 of Hidcote, Gloucestershire, by its creator, Lawrence Johnston. There was also a shift in taste away from the Tudor and Jacobean houses that had appealed so much to the interwar generations: at Hinton Ampner, Hampshire, for example, the Victorian house was remodelled in an elegant Georgian idiom by Ralph Dutton, who left the estate to the Trust in 1985. The bequest in 2003 of The Homewood ***(Fig 1)***, near Esher, Surrey, brought to the charity a distinguished Modern Movement house designed by its owner, the architect Patrick Gwynne ***(Fig 2)***, who shared it with the pianist and composer Geoffrey Rand for more than a decade from 1950.

Fig 7: **Graham Baron Ash, the owner of Packwood, Warwickshire, in a 1943 portrait as High Sheriff by William Dring**

The tradition of gifts and bequests outlined here is important not only for its own sake, but because it corrects another common misconception about the Trust. The idea that it is in thrall to the landowning aristocracy is a criticism that has been frequently expressed, especially from the 1990s onwards, in reaction to the prominence of country houses in public perceptions of the organisation. The legacy of the houses and gardens given to it by so many aesthetically minded bachelors over the past century is evidence that the truth is much more complex. It is a tribute to the range and depth of the Trust's holdings that it owns an unequalled range of houses and gardens restored or created in the 20th century by men who stood well outside the norms of marriage, family and inheritance that the organisation is so often held to embody.

Michael Hall's new book, 'A Queer Inheritance: Alternative Histories in the National Trust' (Books, February 4), is published by Bloomsbury (£25)

Fig 8: **The great hall of Packwood in 1989. It was created from a byre in 1925–27; the tapestries and tables are from Baddesley Clinton**

Mark Fiennes/Paul Barker/Country Life Picture Libary; Future Publishing Ltd; National Trust Images

The legacy Florence Nagle and institutional reform

Leader of the pack: racehorse trainer Florence Nagle with four of her magnificent wolfhounds, which she bred alongside Irish setters

Dogged determination

- Florence Nagle's first Irish wolfhound, Sir Michael of Sheppey, was painted by Cecil Aldin
- In total, she owned or bred 21 UK Irish wolfhound champions, including Sulhamstead Merman, who won Best in Show at Crufts in 1960
- Her Sulhamstead Kennels produced 18 UK Irish (Red) Setter Field Trial Champions —all but three were home bred
- Irish setter Sulhamstead Natty d'Or played a significant role in the 1960/1970s resurrection of Irish red and white setters when solid reds were being bred across to the remnants of the breed in Ireland
- Dogs and horses weren't Nagle's only passion. Her Berkshire boar, named Pamber Ugly Duckling, was champion at the Royal Show held at Osmaston Park, Derbyshire, in 1921

UNDER the heading 'Date of first trainer's licence' in the inaugural edition of *Directory of the British Turf* (1961), Manchester-born Florence Nagle (1894–1988) pointedly detailed 'probably never… like several other women I am only a ghost, unrecognised, without responsibility, but the fact remains that I train the horses and the mistakes and failures are mine, ditto the rare triumphs'.

Then aged 66, Nagle trained a string of about 20 at Westerlands in Petworth, West Sussex, but the licence was held by her head lad, William Stickley.

At her West Sussex yard, Nagle's training licence was held in the name of her head lad for decades

An owner since 1920 and a trainer since the early 1930s, Nagle had been campaigning for more than 20 years for women to be issued with training licences, yet she had been repeatedly rebuffed. The case finally reached the Court of Appeal in 1966 and Nagle emerged victorious—on August 3, 1966, she became one of the first women in Britain to receive a licence. It would be another six years before women jockeys were permitted.

Crediting herself with 'dragging the Jockey Club into the 20th century', the 'Mrs Pankhurst of British horseracing' set her sights on another archaic institution—the Kennel Club (KC). Nagle was a prolific breeder, owner and exhibitor of pedigree dogs, notably Irish wolfhounds and Irish setters, and in 1977, at the age of 83, she challenged the KC's 'men only' rule. Her membership nomination was refused —despite the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975—so she referred the matter to an industrial tribunal stating that: 'It's time women, who make up 80% of those who breed and show dogs here, had some say in the financial and policy-making decisions.' The result was that Nagle and 186 other women were accepted as full members in 1979.

Nagle believed 'someone has to stick their neck out. I don't believe in equality for its sake… you can get idiots in any litter'. At her death, she was one of eight vice presidents of the KC, alongside Princess Antoinette of Monaco and the Duke of Wellington. *AS Crufts dog show runs from March 5–8 at the NEC Birmingham (www.crufts.org.uk)*

The Royal Kennel Club; Shutterstock

Proud sponsors of Britain's Naughtiest Dog

Honey's. Probably the best raw dog food in the world.

- 100% certified organic, free range and wild meat
- Made by hand in small batches in Wiltshire
- Fresh, British ingredients you could eat yourself

It is over 20 years since I started making food for our dogs using ingredients from our organic farm. The formulas were created by the local vet, Tom Farrington, who persuaded me that the dogs would live longer, happier and healthier lives if they were switched to a raw food diet. How right he was!

Neighbours and friends heard about what I was doing (well, okay, I told everyone) and began to ask me to make food for their dogs, too. Then, in 2008, what had been a hobby became a business of sorts. I say 'of sorts' because Honey's is a little eccentric. For example, we'll actually show you how to make your own dog food and provide ongoing advice, free of charge. To offer another example, our Healthcare Team (vets and vet nurses) will provide free nutritional and health advice to anyone who contacts us – there is no need to even pretend to be interested in becoming a customer.

A third of everything that goes into our food is sourced within 17 miles of our Wiltshire kitchen. We use only fresh, British ingredients suitable for human consumption. Our meat is certified organic, free range, pasture fed or wild. Our vegetables are chemical free or certified organic. Because we care about farm animal welfare we take the time to visit all our producers.

We place huge importance on service. We like to chat with our customers and to oooh and ahhh over dog photos (which we count as work). All our customers have my private email address in case they want to get in touch with me. Incidentally, we offer a Bespoke Service where we make your dog's food – raw or cooked – completely to order.

Finally, I just want to add how pleased we are to be sponsoring Britain's Naughtiest Dog competition.

Jonathan (Self)

New to raw feeding?

All the science points to the fact that dogs live longer, happier and healthier lives if fed a raw food diet. We will be happy to talk you through it by telephone and/or we'll pop a free copy of *Honey's Natural Feeding Handbook for Dogs* in the post to you.

Free vet advice

The Honey's Healthcare Team (vets and vet nurses) is available to offer free canine nutritional and health advice. We have a great deal of experience creating personalised diet plans for dogs with health issues.

SAVE 50% + £25 of goodies

New customers usually receive a 25% discount + £25 of free goodies for their first order BUT as a *Country Life* reader you can claim a 50% discount + £25 of goodies. Use the code CL50 if ordering online or just explain how you heard of us if calling or emailing.

Honey's
REAL DOG FOOD

01672 620 260
info@honeysrealdogfood.com
www.honeysrealdogfood.com

Do you own Britain's naughtiest dog?

COUNTRY LIFE is once again searching for irrepressibly cheeky and mischievous mutts as we look to crown our next naughtiest dog

Illustrations by John Holder

SOMETIMES, just sometimes, a thoroughly good dog is, well, just a little bit boring. Of course, we do wholeheartedly applaud those angelic members of the canine race who are immaculately trained—the ones that sit perfectly on the peg, stay in their beds at meal times and always walk to heel, but sometimes, just sometimes, we long for a tumultuous tale, perhaps one that features an impulsive labrador with selective hearing ('Fenton, Fenton, Fenton, *Fenton!*') or a tiny terrier that terrorises the postal service. We revel in stories of cringe-making disobedience and destruction—from counter-surfers and coffee-table chewers to knicker shredders and puddle makers—and want to hear all about the dogs that enjoy a secret life of crime or know the power of a well-placed poo.

To date, only two dogs have been awarded the accolade of 'Britain's naughtiest dog'. In 2015, we met Rabbit (*see box*), a Heinz 57 terrier with a propensity for chewing, but it was an unscheduled trip inside an Amazon delivery van that really took the (dog) biscuit. In 2019, we were introduced to Pici, an innocent-looking Jack Russell who operated as a master thief, stealing everything from Easter eggs and biscuits to her owners' passports. Pici's *pièce de résistance*, however, was accidentally summoning armed police. Bravo, Pici, bravo.

The time has come again to celebrate our love of cheeky canines and we are searching for Britain's Naughtiest Dog, in association with Honey's Real Dog Food (*Spectator*, *page 134*). The winner will take part in a photoshoot (stills and film), a video Q&A and feature in the July 22 issue of the magazine this year, as well as receiving a hamper of goodies from Honey's Real Dog Food and a copy of *Country Life's Book of Dogs*. Three mischievous runners-up will also receive a hamper from Honey's.

Honey's
REAL DOG FOOD

How to enter your dog

To enter Britain's Naughtiest Dog in association with Honey's Real Dog Food, email countrylifedogs@futurenet.com with

- **The name, breed and age of your dog**
- **A good-quality photograph of your dog**
- **Up to 150 words outlining your dog's naughtiest moments**
- **Your name, address and telephone number**

Terms & conditions
Under 18s must obtain parental consent to enter this competition and must be able to evidence this on request. Employees of Future Publishing Ltd ('FUTURE'), their agents, Employees of Honey's Real Dog Food Ltd ('HONEYS'), their agents or anyone else professionally associated with the competition are not eligible to enter. Open to UK residents only, and the dog must reside in the UK. Entries must be received by 23.59 GMT on April 28, 2026. One entry per household. Only one entry per person may be submitted. All entries will become the property of FUTURE and will not be returned. FUTURE accepts no responsibility for entries unsuccessfully submitted. There will be one (1) winner of this competition. The winner will win the following prize: the winner will take part in a photoshoot (video and stills) and be the subject of a feature in the July 22, 2026, issue of COUNTRY LIFE magazine, as well as receive a hamper from Honey's Real Dog Food and a copy of *Country Life's Book of Dogs*. Three (3) runners-up will also receive a hamper from Honey's. If the prize offered cannot be awarded, then a reasonable equivalent of equal value will be awarded instead. The winner and runners-up will be notified on or before May 27, 2026, and the winner must be available for the photoshoot during the month of June (exact date to be mutually agreed between winner and COUNTRY LIFE). The prize stated is not transferable, nor for re-sale, and there is no cash alternative. It will be provided free of charge. Use of automated devices or methods of submission are not valid forms of entry. The winner and runners-up will be notified by email and by telephone within 28 days of the closing date and the winner will be required to commit to a photoshoot date ahead of the July 22, 2026 issue. If the winner and runners-up have not responded after seven days of being contacted, an alternative winner and runner-up will be selected. Photographs and nomination copy will be judged by our editorial team and an independent judge, Katy Birchall. The photograph must not feature more than one dog, other animals or people and the dog must not be wearing any clothing. Photographs featuring inappropriate, unethical, cruel or stressful situations will be rejected and the entry disqualified. The photograph submitted must be the work of the individual submitting it and must not have been published elsewhere or have won a prize in any other competition. It is the responsibility of each entrant to ensure that their entry does not infringe the copyright of any third party or any laws. By entering, you consent that all material sent to COUNTRY LIFE can be published in the magazine and online. For full terms and conditions, visit www.futureplc.com/competition-rules/. These terms and conditions shall be governed by the laws of England and Wales, and any dispute shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts. By taking part in the competition, you agree to the collection of personal data in accordance with FUTURE's privacy policy at https://futureplc.com/privacy-policy/

COUNTRY LIFE
EVERY WEEK
1975–2025
The renaissance of the country house
APRIL 30, 2025
The owners and craftsmen bringing houses back to life
Coming up roses: the plants that Chelsea launched
Maypole merriment, calling cuckoos and pollen detectives
COUNTRY LIFE
Paint to plate: the delicious art you can eat
Why a dog is an artist's best friend
Swords of honour: when men fought duels
How to make friends with a wasp and spot a golden eagle
COUNTRY LIFE
Let battle commence
The art of war reporting
The 39 steps: a gentleman's rules for life
Grrrrr! Britain's most dangerous beasts revealed
Early-morning pints, planting birch and Bewick's birds
COUNTRY LIFE
Please save us
Britain's rarest dog breeds
COUNTRY LIFE
Animals saving our landscape
Eat for you, eat for the planet
Look on the bright side: the solar-power debate
The best of the Proms, by The King's composer
COUNTRY LIFE
Interiors special
COUNTRY LIFE
The Advent calendar
Perfect present ideas and festive feasts: try something new this Christmas
COUNTRY LIFE
The interiors issue
Rita Konig on the importance of 'stuff'
Pip, pip! The extraordinary marvel of seeds
Saving newts and lobsters: the real wildlife heroes
COUNTRY LIFE
The Season
What on earth to wear?
Our guide to having the best fun
Tastes of childhood, from Angel Delight to Dairy Lea
COUNTRY LIFE
Cotswold char
The best houses for sale thi
COUNTRY LIFE
The Scottish issue
Glorious Glamis
47 pages of the best properties for sale
The Thirty-Nine Steps: the world of John Buchan
How the Glasgow Boys transformed art
Autumn is early: what to do with your blackberries
COUNTRY LIFE
The Fine Art issue
What makes an Old Master?
The birds and the bees: love in the animal kingdom
Classic country stories, French onion soup and fittest machines
COUNTRY LIFE
Walking on water
Britain's magical sea paths
COUNTRY LIFE
'The kindest, sweetest dog'
Why the greyhound won Jilly Cooper's heart
Bedtime rituals: how to keep the romance
Steam, power and not-so-lonesome pine martens
COUNTRY LIFE
Pure rural joy
Brambly Hedge revisited
Where to see orcas in the UK
Kitchen confidential, why cooks' tables are back
Fit for a queen: the bee-venom beauty treatment
COUNTRY LIFE
Ready, ste
The wonderful thing
COUNTRY LIFE
The Hampshire chronicles
13 reasons why the county has it all
COUNTRY LIFE
Just the ticket
COUNTRY LIFE
The Cotswolds issue
140 pages of property for sale
Have you done the Chelsea chop?
Femme fatales: spies who helped win the war
Just for one day: Nature's fleeting heroes
Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, the 'Marquis of Marmite'
COUNTRY LIFE
Country-house treasures
Extraordinary stories from our great houses
COUNTRY LIFE
When I grow up, I will be your eyes
How guide dogs are trained to change lives
COUNTRY LIFE
And did those
The 12 walks to do thi
Incredible journeys: why animals
Keep warm: Tom Parker Bowles's ho
Heavenly hellebores and the Brueg
COUNTRY LIFE
The US issue
Hush puppies, property for sale
Route 66 and all that jazz
COUNTRY LIFE
The Christmas Double Issue
COUNTRY LIFE
By Royal Appointment
COUNTRY LIFE
Castle Howard
A heroic vision
COUNTRY LIFE
Travel issue
COUNTRY LIFE
The British Wildlife Awards

Subscription offer

COUNTRY LIFE

The perfect present

Make someone's week, every week, with a subscription

COUNTRY LIFE
EVERY WEEK
Down, boy!
Our search for Britain's naughtiest dog
Pints, poetry and the pubs that inspired greatness
I've got your back': good turns in the animal kingdom
Let there be light: the art of glass architecture
The Fine Art Issue
COUNTRY LIFE
Frequent flyers
The wonder of feathers
How to win at curling
Needle match: why darning is back

Subscribe for someone now and get 12 months for £175

Easy ways to subscribe

Visit: www.magazinesdirect.com/XCL/DN22T

Telephone: 0330 333 1120 *(quote code* DN22T)

Offer closes April 30, 2026. Offer open to new UK subscribers only. Direct Debit payments are available in the UK only. After your trial period ends, your subscription will continue at the price shown at the point of purchase. Gift only available to new subscribers on the UK mainland. Your gift will be delivered separately within 60 days after your first payment has cleared. This gift is not available outside of the UK or with digital-only subscriptions. Limited stock, available to the first 1,000 new subscribers. We will notify you in advance of any price changes. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue. Payment is non-refundable after the 14-day cancellation period unless exceptional circumstances apply. For full terms and conditions, visit magazinesdirect.com/terms

I've got you, babe

Whether mutually beneficial or a parasitic nuisance, Nature's symbiotic relationships are as multifarious as they are marvellous, says **John Lewis-Stempel**

BIRDS do it, bees do it and fleas, educated or otherwise, most certainly do it. 'It', in this case, is what biologists term 'symbiosis', meaning a close, long-term necessary interaction with another different species. The word hasn't strayed far from its root, the Ancient Greek *symbios* (living together with another) and *bios* (life). Symbiosis can be lovely, it can be nasty, it can be indifferent, but it made the natural world in which we live. A squillion years ago, primitive plant forms trying to get a grip on the earth of Earth got a rooting leg down with the aid of anchoring fungi. To this day, the vast majority of plants and trees—more than 90%—still rely on the thin threads of underground mycorrhizal fungi to live and to breathe, even to send chemical messages to other arborea, the 'Wood Wide Web'. Symbiosis: it's a long-term affair.

> 'Together, they are greater than the sum of their parts, harmony in action'

Nature, being Nature, exhibits symbiosis in more ways than you can shake a Powerpoint remote controller at. Our little grey cells conveniently reduce it to three main sorts. We'll commence with mutualism, whereby both species benefit, either thriving together so that both win or when the one could not survive without the other. The most well-known example of mutualistic symbiosis is the relationship of the aforementioned bees with the flower and vice versa. In return for receiving sweet nectar, bees help to pollinate the plants that may have otherwise not been able to reproduce. This happens because pollen sticks to the bees' legs when they feed; there are even bees with special adaptations, pollen 'baskets', on their spindly limbs to help the harvesting from, say, the wildflower-spreckled verge on the local country lane. Our human version of mutualism is incorporated in the apothegm 'scratch my back, I'll scratch yours'; more elevatedly, there is the Latin expression *quid pro quo*.

We humans rather like mutualism. If it is transactional, something for something, it also suggests societal co-operation and cohesion. Bonding as a means of survival. According to a quote often attributed to Charles Darwin: 'In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate →

Head groom: magpies perform makeovers for red deer and other animals, devouring ticks as a reward for pest-removal duties

A mining bee transports pollen from flower to flower as it feeds on the nectar from fleabane

and improvise most effectively have prevailed.' You drive your car safely in the expectation that others do likewise.

Out in the British countryside, the examples of mutualism are as multifarious as they are marvellous. Take, for starters, a hypothetical good old meadow with ant hills strewn like grassy scatter cushions. Say this flowery mead lies alongside our bee-friendly lane noted above. Down in the very base of the yellow meadow ants' tump, in a cellar, the mob of *Lasius flavus* keep a herd of aphids to be 'milked' (licked, in fact) for the sugar, or honeydew, they produce. A colony of yellow meadow ants can easily harvest 22lb–33lb of sugar from its aphids over a summer. In return, the aphids receive protection from predators and valeting that cleanses them of parasites. Think insect dairy-farming.

In that same meadow, there may be blue butterflies, dilettantish, flitty-floating about and likewise in a symbiotic relationship with ants, what is technically 'myrmecophily'. The caterpillars of Adonis blue (*Polyommatus bellargus*), an icon of chalk grassland, exude the honeydew that ants are so delirious for —to the extent that the ants carry the caterpillars into their underground nest, where, safe, the latter pupate over winter.

In the meadow there are also starlings (*Sturnidae*) on the backs of sheep, picking off annoying bugs. The bird gets grub, Shaun the Sheep gets relieved of an itch, an avian-ovine symbiosis acknowledged in the old folk name for starlings, 'sheepstares'.

Magpies (*Pica pica*) perform grooming duties on farm beasts, too, before flying back to roost in the alders lining the brook. The

All aboard: barnacles travel to nutrient-rich waters by hitching a ride with humpback whales

alder trees (*Alnus glutinosa*) fix nitrogen in the soil through a symbiotic relationship with *Frankia* bacteria in their root nodules, thus enriching the ground. The peas and other legumes—our future food—in the surrounding crop fields do the same nourishment of the earth, but with other bacteria. On the bark of the alder are grey clumps of lichen, which, despite appearances, are not one organism, but symbiotic relationships between fungi and algae (or, sometimes, cyanobacteria). The fungus provides the stable protective architecture, whereas the algae photosynthesis produces the life-giving energy. Together, they are greater than the sum of their parts, harmony in action. In the oak wood beyond the pea field, chanterelle mushrooms (*Cantharellus cibarius*) are draped like a small orange robe about the base of an oak, filling the woodland →

Safe passage: the clownfish is immune to the venomous tentacles of the anemone

International relations

From Africa to the Arctic, from Red Sea to Black Sea, from high moor to low estuary foreshore, garden to jungle, symbiosis is all around the round globe

• The ocean's pistol shrimps (*Alpheidae*) and gobies (*Gobiidae*) put the landlord-tenant relationship on a whole new level—or perhaps burrow. The shrimp digs a hole in the sandy seafloor, which it shares with the goby fish. When the goby spots a potential predator, it uses chemical cues, interpretable by the shrimp, so that both of the odd couple bolt for cover in the shared burrow

Home to roost: the Hardwicke's woolly bat hides out in the 'sleeping bag' of the carnivorous pitcher plant

• Hardwicke's woolly bats (*Kerivoula hardwickii*) roost in *Nepenthes hemsleyana*, a tropical pitcher plant found in Borneo. The plant is carnivorous, but the bat gets a daytime, hidey-hole sleeping bag. The pitcher plant benefits from the bat's vital-rich guano

• In the warm waters of the Pacific or Indian Oceans, sea anemones (*Actiniaria*) trap and kill their prey with toxins, but clownfish (*Amphiprion*) are immune, living safely within the anemone's waving venomous tentacles. In reciprocity, the clowny-dressed clownfish attract other fish looking for a meal… to be eaten by the anemones

• Into the very jaws of danger: although thought by some to be apocryphal, the tiny Egyptian plover bird (*Pluvianus aegyptius*) apparently enters the gaping mouth of crocodiles and eats stuff stuck in the reptile's jagged teeth. The croc gets a free dental hygienist; the hygienist gets lunch

• Corals may look like rocks or plants, but they are truly marine fauna. Their beguiling, vivid colours? They come courtesy of the zooxanthellae algae with which they associate, mutualistically

• Oxpecker by name, oxpecker by nature. A denizen of Africa, the oxpecker bird (*Buphagus*) veritably takes large grazing mammals, such as wildebeest, rhinos and zebras, to the cleaners, picking off their ticks and blood-sucking flies

We've got your back: starlings live up to the folkname of 'sheepstares', performing an itch-relieving ovine-bug-removal service

air with their apricot perfume. Mycorrhizal fungi are not random; chanterelle form a mutualistic relationship with the roots of particular host trees, primarily oak, beech, birch, pine and spruce in the UK. They are a gourmand's delight.

Number two type symbiosis is commensalism, where one species benefits when the other does not, but the latter is not harmed in the process and is indifferent to it. It's the graceful, brilliant-white cattle egrets (*Bubulcus*), an increasingly common bird in the UK, getting a free meal of insects stirred up by bovine hooves and its water fleas, *Daphnia*, feeding on the algae and micro-organisms stirred by grazing aquatic snails in the pond in the meadow corner. Our virtual field is also conveniently beside the seaside. Commensalism is barnacles getting a free ride on the cruising whales to nutrient-rich waters.

Ants are so attracted to honeydew exuded by caterpillars of the Adonis blue butterfly that they transport the larva to their underground nest to pupate safely over winter

As the Devil has all the best tunes, so parasitic symbiosis, number three, has all the best stories in symbiosis—and all the grimmest reapers. Fleas on the shepherd's sheepdog, ticks on the deer that live in the wood beyond the crop field, the 30in *Anoplocephala magna* tapeworm in the gut of the child's pony trotting along the lane. In parasitism, derived from the Latin for 'one who eats at the table of another', the parasitic organism lives off a host at the host's expense, even unto its death. The mistletoe festooning the apple tree in the orchard behind the meadow has developed special roots that penetrate the tree's bark and tap into its water and nutrient sources. Down in the rock pools, it's a parasite's delight. The isopod *Anilocra physodes*, a woodlouse-like thing, clamps on to some luckless fish, notably wrasse, and sucks the lifeblood out of them. Then there is its cousin the isopod *Ceratothoa steindachneri*, known as the tongue-biter, which attaches to the tongue of weaver fish until the tongue shrivels and falls off. Don't forget, either, the truly macabre crab hacker barnacle (*Sacculina carcini*), which attaches to the underside of the shore crab, invades its body with probing fleshy rootlets, then chemically castrates it. An infected male even develops a wider, feminine abdomen, together with motherly characteristics. The hacked crab guards the parasite's eggs, attached to its underside, as if they were its own. Welcome to the Rocky Pool Horror Show.

Symbiosis. It makes the natural world go around. We can't live without it, but sometimes we'd rather not know the details.

Getty; Andy Sands/Georgette Douwma/naturepl.com; Alamy

Registered Charity No: 309681

ST. EDWARD'S
OXFORD

LANDLINES
INSTEAD OF MOBILES

OVER 100 SPORTS, ACTIVITIES CLUBS & SOCIETIES

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE IVY LEAGUE

100 ACRES OF PITCHES & A BOATHOUSE ON THE THAMES

Read about the school's robust mobile phone policy on the website

stedwardsoxford.org

WEEKLY & FULL BOARDING | DAY | A LEVEL & IB | CO-EDUCATIONAL | 13 – 18

David Profumo

Baby, it's cold outside

The globetrotting, dandyish Arctic charr's story is full of mysteries–not least its links to Loch Ness

Illustration by Fiona Osbaldstone

A RELICT of the last Ice Age, when deglaciation gradually stranded its migratory ancestors some 12,000 years ago (a mere eyeblink in geological time), our British populations of Arctic charr are today all landlocked and inhabit deep, cold lakes, where they are rarely seen except by those deliberately seeking them. *Salvelinus alpinus* enjoys a circumpolar distribution, from Japan to Greenland, and no other freshwater fish thrives in more northerly climes. Arctic charr have colonised the high Alps up to 7,000ft, where a dwarf variety exists (*Schwartzreuter*), and in Geneva's Lac Léman they shoal at depths of 200ft. For his knightly appearance, in France he is the *omble chevalier*.

The knightly charr—'as beautiful as a butterfly' to Edwardian author Patrick Chalmers

> 'Its back is of an olive-green; its belly of a light vermillion'

It is problematic to describe a 'typical' UK charr, as colouration varies considerably according to the habits and habitat of different lacustrine populations. In 1786, William Gilpin wrote of the Windermere fish (one of our most celebrated): 'Its back is of an olive-green; its belly of a light vermillion: softening in some parts into white; and changing into a deep red, at the insertion of the fins.' Especially in his spawning garb, the male is a dandyish creature, with an olivaceous torpedo-shaped body often sprinkled with pale or pink spots (the trout wears dark ones), a belly of sunset orange and white edges to his lower fins. The scales are miniscule and deeply imbedded. Although some anadromous American specimens are heavyweights, topping 30lb, our charr might average 10oz—'near twice the size of a herring,' says Gilpin.

It is estimated there might be some 200 colonies in Britain, many of them in Scotland. Old 'tartan fins' swims in the abyssal reaches of Lochs Garry, Loyal, Quoich and Ness (where, being gregarious unlike brown trout, charr flourish in vast shoals down to a depth of 500ft, perhaps providing fodder for You Know What). In Wales, the *torgoch* is found in Llyns Peris and Bodlyn, and Irish strongholds include Loughs Dearg, Melvin and Currane. Its name derives from *ceara*, Gaelic for blood-red, and there is still some dispute about whether it should be spelled with a single 'r' or, as in the older version, charr. Neither a cuppa nor your cleaning lady is lexically cognate with the fish.

Victorian naturalists, with their passion for taxonomy, identified as many as 15 separate species of charr, but today all European variants are considered as belonging to a single species. In certain waters, there are two or more discrete populations coexisting (sympatric), each with a slightly different genetic make-up. These 'morphs' can be distinguished by behavioural discrepancies, such as spawning or feeding patterns. Many spawn in autumn and may run up feeder streams to excavate gravel 'redds' for their eggs—but in some waters the fish don't spawn until early spring, around now. Open-water charr filter-feed on zooplankton such as daphnia, whereas benthivorous varieties may concentrate on molluscs, crustacea, wiggly bloodworm larvae or stickleback eggs. Pike, perch and eels devour charr, but its greatest predator is the cannibalistic ferox trout, which can only exist where they abound.

Adaptable as they are, charr are susceptible to acidification from forestry, pollution from ill-treated sewage and algal blooms that deoxygenate the water. Much scientific study has been conducted on Windermere, where there may coexist as many as five different races. Charr here were once intensively netted, as they were historically in demand as a breakfast delicacy—originally transported south on packhorses in huge pies (each containing four dozen fish) and later potted, the flesh mixed with nutmeg and melted butter. You used to be able to buy it in Fortnum & Mason. In Iceland, the resplendent *bleikja* is often smoked over sheep dung.

Anglers traditionally caught them by trailing a plumbline with a set of brightly polished spinning lures (gold from an Australian sovereign was the preferred metal), a sleigh bell affixed to the rod-tip, and there are still a few devotees—I am planning an expedition this July. Occasionally, charr will dimple-rise on the surface (known as 'belbing') and can be caught on flies. That charming Edwardian author Patrick Chalmers only ever hooked one thus, 'but he was as beautiful as a butterfly'.

Ecologists and geneticists continue to be intrigued by the complex communities of charr and regard them as the piscine equivalents of Darwin's Galápagos finches with their differing beak formations. In 1980, a serious scientific body was formed—the International Study of Arctic Charr Fanatics—and, given that many of the researchers hail from Scotland, it has been suggested the fish be spelled, as pronounced, 'charrr'.

design centre
LONDON

PRESENTS

LONDON DESIGN WEEK 2026

SPRING'S UNMISSABLE
INTERIORS EVENT

MONDAY 9 – FRIDAY 13 MARCH

FREE REGISTRATION
www.dcch.co.uk

DESIGN CENTRE, CHELSEA HARBOUR
LONDON SW10 0XE

Credits & Advertising | Design Centre Chelsea Harbour

It’s alive!

Across the country, small producers are rediscovering the ancient art of fermentation, with delicious results. **Tom Howells** samples British-made kefir, kombucha, kraut and more

IN food terms, fermenting is as close to true alchemy as we get; the transformation of base ingredients into weird, wonderful and delicious forms that are, thanks to friendly bacteria working away at microscopic levels to convert sugars and starches into acids, alcohols and gases, literally alive.

It's ubiquitous, responsible for everything from beige staples such as bread and beer to cheese, yoghurt, vinegar, kombucha and kefir (of which more shortly). It's a global phenomenon, too: take the Horn of Africa's sour *injera* pancakes, *kvass* in Eastern Europe (a fizzy drink traditionally made with stale rye bread), soy sauce in China, the Filipino shrimp sauce of *bagoong*, *kimchi* in Korea, *miso* in Japan… the list goes on and on.

Ever since the emergence of agrarian Neolithic communities, fermenting has been an essential form of preservation for humankind through cold, dark winters and periods of scarcity. In his book *The Science of Fermentation*, Robin Sherriff even notes that the early ingestion of fermented fruit may have kickstarted the brain development of modern humans—a happy salve for the cider drinkers among us. Regardless of any historic impact on our brainpower, many fermented foods and drinks are rich in probiotics, living organisms with a host of putative benefits for our digestion.

For some reason, Britain never really developed the panoply of fermented foods seen elsewhere: the chef, writer and fermentation enthusiast Thom Eagle puts this, in part, down to our country's kitchen-bound and generational fear of salt and bacteria. Mercifully, a host of independent, UK-based producers are now bucking the trend, creating delectable products teeming with a life of their own.

'We want to be part of the revolution to bring fermentation back'

The Crafty Pickle Co sauerkraut, Crick, Monmouthshire

Self-confessed 'science geeks, tree huggers and food nerds' Madi Myers and Arthur Serini met when studying nutrition in the mid 2010s. They'd always been interested in fermentation's role in gut health, but became truly fascinated by the wonder of controlled rot on a 2017 camping tour of the Scottish Highlands, *sans* fridge. 'We had several jars of sauerkraut [fermented shredded cabbage] and *kimchi* [a spicy mix of fermented vegetables] in the boot of Madi's car,' explains Mr Serini. 'They kept really well out of the fridge and it got us thinking about the role that fermented foods play in our food system.'

After peeling away for a couple of years, they rejoined forces in Aberdeen, spotting a gap in the market and starting The Crafty Pickle Co in 2019, creating tiny batches of 'kraut in glass fermentation vessels. After moving back to Miss Myers's native Wales in 2021, they started sourcing surplus root vegetables from smallholders around Crick, Crickhowell and Monmouthshire and set to work upscaling the business.

To Mr Serini's mind, a perfect sauerkraut should be thinly sliced, crunchy and long-fermented (to reflect its Eastern European origins, when huge batches would be aged over winter) and sour and tangy on the palate. Their signature Crafty Kraut encapsulates this: a 21-day-aged mix of cabbage, carrots, caraway, garlic and sea salt, of which they make about 20,000 jars a year (and which pips, but only just, the equally toothsome, jalapeño-spiked Mexicana Kraut).

> 'Delicious as it is, the idea of preservation as an ethical boon remains key to the Crafty Kraut ethos'

Delicious as it is, the overall idea of preservation as an ethical boon, as well as its importance in the history of gastro evolution, remains key to the Crafty Kraut ethos. 'In the past 100 or so years, fermentation has kind of fallen away a little bit,' says Miss Myers. 'We want to be part of the revolution to bring it back.'

From £7.25; www.thecraftypickle.co.uk

'We use whatever's in season that we can get our hands on'

Old Tree Brewery kombucha, Lewes, East Sussex

The seed for Old Tree was planted with a chance encounter on a train, when founders Tom Daniell and Nick Godshaw, on their way back from an anti-fracking event, bonded over 'life, the environment and wanting to work with Nature—and what you can make from Nature,' explains managing director, Tai Ray-Jones. They tried out a forest-gardening project and a café, but, spurred by the botanical drinks they'd been concocting, refocused their efforts on quaffable probiotics in 2018.

'Kombucha [a fermented tea] ticked all the boxes,' notes Mr Ray-Jones. 'It's low in alcohol and sugar—and, once you get the base, you can add all sorts of things to it: fruits, leaves, flowers, herbs.'

For the foundation of their recipe, they plumped for a blend of sencha and Assam teas, to which bacterial cultures are added in the form of a gelatinous disc called a 'scoby'. The fermentation process takes a couple of weeks, after which they mix in natural, hydrostilled flavourings. Of all their perennial variations, Oaklore is the simplest, unflavoured, but still 'slightly apple-y'. Ancient Futures is made with Boadicea hops, 'for something more beery'. Forager's Garden, meanwhile, factors a palate of lemon balm and lavender. They also knock up seasonal brews: mugwort, rosehips, linden blossom →

Facing page: **Kraut of this world: Arthur Serini and Madi Myers, founders of The Crafty Pickle.** *Right:* **Hands-on: Mr Serini at work**

or mint, say—'we use whatever's in season that we can get our hands on'—all foraged or sourced from local growers, for tiny batches.

Crucially, many commercial kombuchas are heavily filtered, with CO_2 and probiotics added later; little more than *bijou* hipster pop. Not so at Old Tree Brewery, Mr Ray-Jones explains. 'We let the microbes do the work and we let them stay in the drink. With our kombucha, you get all the life.'
From £3.50; www.oldtreebrewery.co.uk

To a tea: seasonal ingredients are the stars in Old Tree Brewery's kombucha

Best of the rest

Blesys Sherp hot sauce, Cornwall
A small-scale operation in the Cornish village of Millbrook, Blesys Sherp—the local adjective for 'spicy'—was started by three friends seeking to apply to chillies the same nerdish appreciation they do to specialty coffee. Their signature 'house' sauce melds habaneros and mango to piping effect.
£6.50; https://blesyssherp.co.uk

Tempeh Meades, Bristol
Tempeh is a nutty-tasting pressed cake of cooked and fermented soy beans, often used like tofu. Tempeh Meades was founded in 2019 by Ben Meades, who learned about commercial tempeh production in West Java before moving to Bristol to start making his delicious take on the vegan staple.
From £8.50; www.tempehmeades.com

Bombom gochujang, London
South Korean chef Seji Hong began creating condiments after running a supper club from her flat in Wimbledon. Her gochujang—a fermented chilli paste—is tweaked from the traditional Korean style, incorporating plum syrup for sweetness and garlic for a faintly more European flavour profile.
From £8.50; https://bombom-market.com

Leap of faith: Becci Paterson (*top centre*) is now at the helm of Ostlers, a family business in Devon that is turning Michelin, Dabinett and Brown's apples into cloudy cider vinegar

'When it's wrong, it's right'

Ostlers cloudy apple cider vinegar, Goodleigh, Devon

At its core, apple cider vinegar is simply cider gone bad; infiltrated by airborne bacteria that transform the booze into piquant, fruity acids. It is a nightmare for commercial cider-makers—but magic for folks such as the Ostlers.

Founded by Peter Hartnoll as a cider mill in 1987, Ostlers began creating the sharp stuff after he started supping an off batch of cider as a Roman-era remedy for his arthritis. It miraculously improved; convinced of its healing properties, Mr Hartnoll began selling the vinegar as a dedicated product. It was a straightforward shift, laughs his daughter, Becci Paterson, as 'even his cider tasted like vinegar'. Almost 30 years later, with Mr Hartnoll retired and Miss Paterson at the helm, Ostlers is the South-West's pre-eminent producer of cloudy apple cider vinegar.

To make the vinegar, Miss Paterson takes cider-apple varieties such as Michelin, Dabinett and Brown's, fermenting their juice in tanks of up to 6,000 litres in size. Over a few years, a web-like culture of natural yeast and bacteria called a 'mother'

AdobeStock; Tim Lamerton

Susana Perez—with daughters Maya and Eva (*above*)—is making a success of her cow-to-kefir business (*below*)

develops, which transforms the sweet liquid into vinegar. 'When it's wrong, it's right,' she says of the process. This culture ('like a massive alien afterbirth that gets everywhere and clogs up our pumps') is kept in the bottle; something considered unsightly to the health-store demographic that had apple cider vinegar ringfenced when Ostlers started marketing theirs properly, about 16 years ago—but now commonplace given its abundance of healthy bacteria and enzymes.

As happenstance goes, Ostlers' segue from a workaday cider mill to a sustainable, organic, off-grid business of award-winning repute was, confirms Miss Paterson, 'a very good—but an accidental—move. We make really amazing vinegar, but we make a slightly sharp cider!'

From £4.25; www.ostlerscidervinegar.com

'I didn't want to be on some industrial estate—I wanted to be next to the cows'
Susana & Daughters kefir, Midhurst, West Sussex

Susana Perez was a teenager when she discovered the wondrous properties of kefir, a probiotic milk drink loaded with protein and vitamin B12, which originated in the Caucasus mountains between Russia and Georgia. A judo champion in her native Spain, she was given it as an unlikely strengthening hack by the grandmother of a colleague. 'I was never ill and really strong,' she says. 'To me, it was a magical thing. I was going to competitions and winning.' Now, Mrs Perez is the force behind Susana & Daughters, the kefir brand that she makes with milk from a herd at Cowdray Park. Decades after discovering kefir and following a more recent eureka moment when she was trekking the Camino de Santiago trail, she decided to start making it herself. After learning the ropes on an organic farm near Barcelona in Spain, she approached the West Sussex estate to see if they'd let her set up shop alongside their free-range cows. Operating at a small scale was paramount. 'I didn't want to be on some industrial estate,' she says. 'I wanted to be next to the cows.' She met the estate CEO, Jonathan Russell, who relayed her idea to the Viscount and Viscountess Cowdray. They adored it.

'After a eureka moment trekking the Camino de Santiago trail, she decided to start making it herself'

Good milk equals good kefir and Cowdray's, she stresses, is excellent. She started in 2018 proper, in an 18th-century stone estate building, converted into a 'kitchen for kefir'. She produced her first commercial batch in February 2019 and is now making 500 bottles a week, always sold in glass (she's also vehemently averse to plastic waste). Mrs Perez adds nothing to her full-fat milk but kefir culture grains, which convert lactose into lactic acid. The milk is pasteurised to destroy bacteria, but it's not put through a homogeniser, which would destroy fats and protein structures and remove the nutrients. The result? A creamy, complex, effervescent drink with—given the distance from cow to kitchen—negligible food miles. 'It's like the king of yoghurt,' she concludes, 'with billions of gut-friendly bacteria.'

£4.50; www.cowdray.co.uk

The pubs that made history

What do our beloved hostelries have to do with the discovery of DNA, the D-Day landings and *The Lord of the Rings*? Everything, as **Ashleigh Arnott** discovers

PUBS have always been so much more than mere places to drink. They're woven tightly into the fabric of Britain's story, forming a backdrop to—and quite often playing a pivotal role in—historic events, both for good and for ill. For every Seven Stars in Bristol, whose landlord was instrumental in the abolition of slavery, there is an Eclipse Inn in Winchester, Hampshire, where Lady Alice Lisle was beheaded in 1685 for harbouring fugitives (and is said to have haunted ever since).

Where did it all begin? When the Romans invaded in AD43, they brought *tabernae*—roadside shops that sold fortifying drinks and food to soldiers—to these shores, but Britons swiftly swapped their wine for ale, paving the way for us to frequent what were known as alehouses, taverns and coaching inns. In 1552, an Act of Parliament decreed that all landlords of alcohol-dispensing premises needed a licence and, in 1577, Elizabeth I's Privy Council commissioned a survey revealing that there was roughly one drinking establishment for every 200 people in England and Wales. These were a home from home for people of all ages and occupations: ale and beer were safer to drink than much water at the time and were generally much less potent than they are today (unlike gin, which tended to be stronger).

By the 1700s, the catch-all term 'public house' was in use as a way to differentiate such hostelries from private houses that were not looking for custom. By Georgian times, it was in such common use that most

people simply shortened it to the 'pub'. By the early 1800s, the stagecoach routes criss-crossing the country were bringing more (and a greater variety of) people than ever through the doors: many establishments introduced various bars and stables for different classes of guest and their horses, a system that was adopted by the railways.

Ironically, the status of the pub as neutral ground also made it a stage for various explosive encounters, such as the Bill o'Jacks Murders of 1832 at the Moor Cock Inn in Saddleworth, then in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in which the landlord and his son were beaten to death. The pub soon drew crowds that wanted to see the bloodstains.

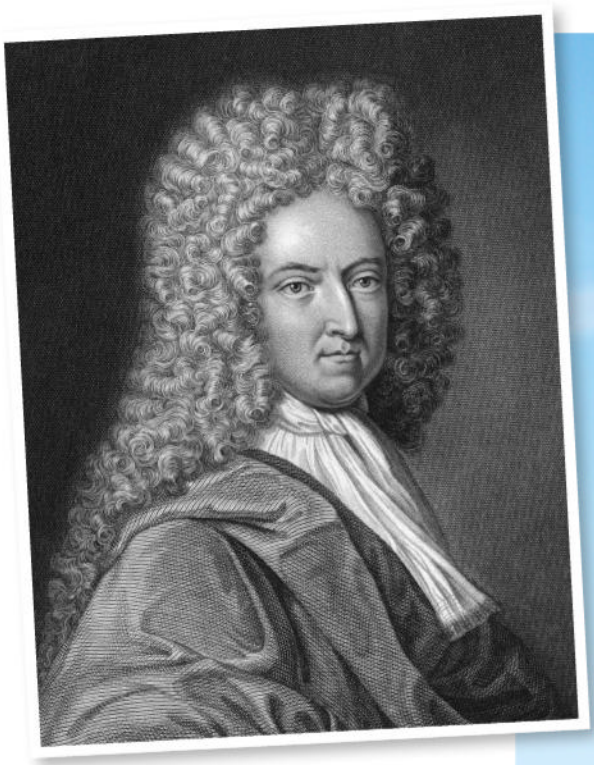
Today, your local is much more likely to serve craft beers and have Farrow & Ball on the walls than witness anything so dramatic, but even the most innocuous-looking locals can have surprisingly rich histories—here are a few of the most interesting, all well worth a visit.

Life's rich tapestry: the pub has been the focal point of our towns and villages for centuries, as seen in *Behind the bar*, 1882

The epicurean epicentre

The Bell Inn at Stilton, Cambridgeshire

Daniel Defoe—author of *Robinson Crusoe*—was a regular at The Bell Inn at Stilton and, in 1724, described the village in his *Tour through the villages of England & Wales* as a place 'famous for cheese, which is call'd our English Parmesan'. That fame had been →



A big cheese: The Bell Inn (*right*) helped to put Stilton on the map, counting Daniel Defoe (*above*) among its former customers

built by The Bell's charismatic manager and later landlord, Cooper Thornhill. When he took charge of the premises in 1705, Thornhill turned The Bell Inn into the best food stop in the Midlands, which was a lucrative position when you're placed on the main thoroughfare for carriages travelling north from London. As demand grew for the blue cheeses made 30 miles north of Stilton, he went into partnership with a well-respected cheesemaker from Wymondham in Leicestershire, Frances Pawlett. It's believed that she created a co-operative, recruiting other neighbouring cheesemakers to make cheese to her recipe that would then be sold from The Bell. Stilton cheese retained its status from then on, but with the advent of rail travel the Great North Road (now the A1) became less influential. After Stilton gained a bypass in 1958, The Bell Inn actually closed for a period, but was refurbished in 2024 and is now an excellent stop off for a hearty dinner. *Great North Road, Stilton, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire (01733 241066; www.thebellstilton.co.uk)*

Raising the roof: the ceiling of the RAF Bar at The Eagle in Cambridge is covered in doodles left by Allied airmen during the Second World War

A scientist's sanctum

The Eagle, Cambridgeshire

The Eagle has been slaking the thirst of Cambridge scholars since the 17th century, but it wasn't until February 28, 1953, that it earned its blue plaque. It was the lunch spot of choice for Francis Crick and James Watson when they worked in the nearby Cavendish Laboratory, which specialised in experimental physics. When they realised they'd made a discovery—DNA's double helix structure—that would change science forever, Crick burst into their local and exclaimed that they'd 'discovered the secret of life'.

Since its original plaque went up, fellow Cambridge scientist Rosalind Franklin's contribution to the discovery has been acknowledged and an updated plaque now credits all three of the scientists—which will save the people who were regularly adding her name to the first iteration a fortune in Sharpies. Current owners Greene King will happily pour you a pint of Eagle's DNA in liquid tribute. Sup it at a table in the RAF Bar, where the ceiling is covered in names, squadron numbers and doodles made by Allied airmen—using wax crayons, petrol lighters and even lipstick—during the Second World War.

Bene't Street, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire (01223 505020; www.greeneking.co.uk/pubs/cambridgeshire/eagle)

Bridgeman Images; Getty; Alamy; Jane Russell; Shutterstock; Greene King; The Globe

A bard's bolthole

The Globe Inn, Dumfries and Galloway

Down a stone-paved alley in the centre of Dumfries, two bronze plaques immediately reveal what makes The Globe Inn a place of Scottish pilgrimage: it was Rabbie Burns's favourite haunt (or 'howff', as he'd have put it). The Scottish poet moved his family to Dumfriesshire in 1788 and was a regular at The Globe until his death in 1796. His habit of enjoying affairs with women in service was further enabled here; the landlady's niece, Anna Park, was employed as a barmaid in the inn and was the inspiration for Burns's much-loved song *The Gowden Locks of Anna*. Park gave birth to his illegitimate daughter, but it's thought she died after childbirth, as the baby—Elizabeth 'Betty' Burns—was taken in and raised by Burns's wife, Jean Armour. The pub does not wear its Burns links lightly: today, you can still see the window panes into which the poet etched his verse using a diamond stylus and learn about the gloriously Scottish dishes he was served by the landlady, Mrs Hyslop; sheep's heid was a particular favourite. The restaurant is well regarded today and celebrates the finest Scottish ingredients.

No 56, High Street, Dumfries, Dumfries and Galloway (www.globeinndumfries.co.uk)

> 'The Globe Inn was Rabbie Burns's favourite "howff"'

The riverside refuge

Town of Ramsgate, London

George 'Hanging Judge' Jeffreys had a notorious legal career: presiding over the Bloody Assizes of 1685, during which participants in the failed Monmouth Rebellion against James II were punished, he was known for making dark jokes ahead of his sentencings and seemingly chose execution at any opportunity. When the King fled the country following the Glorious Revolution in 1688, Jeffreys attempted to follow, hiding in a pub in Wapping now known as The Town of Ramsgate to wait for the boat to Hamburg. To avoid suspicion, he dressed as a sailor, but despite his commitment to the disguise—he even shaved off his eyebrows—a surviving victim of his harsh judgement recognised him. He was captured and imprisoned.

These days, the pub is a classic locals' drinking hole, with Young's London Original on the hand-pull pump and pie and mash at the top of the food menu. Its name was adopted due to its position next to Wapping Old Stairs, a River Thames mooring that 19th-century fishermen from Ramsgate used to avoid the river taxes that had been imposed up near Billingsgate Market. The stairs were also the spot where sailors would meet their sweethearts upon their return to London.

No 62, Wapping High Street, London E1 (020–7481 8000; www.townoframsgate.pub)

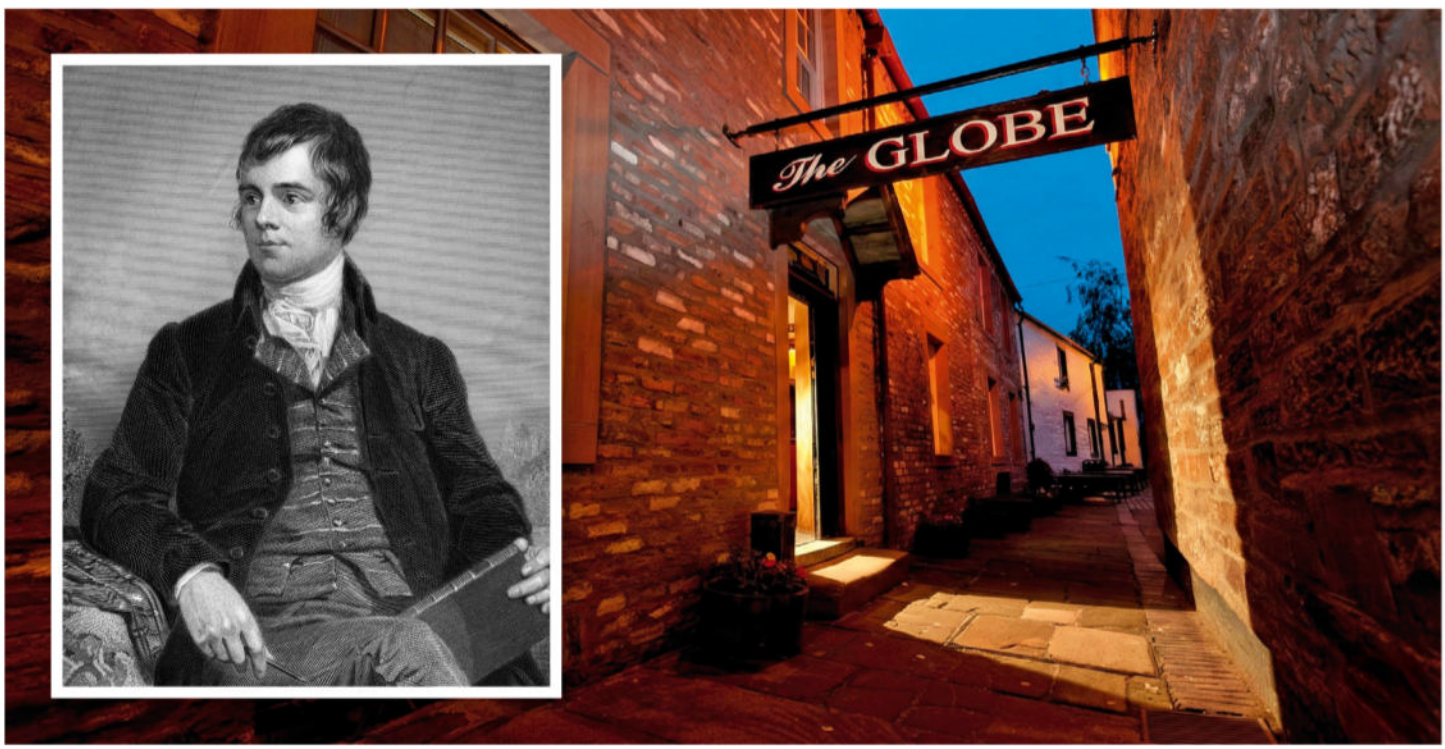
Let battle commence

The Bells of Peover, Cheshire

At less than 200 years old, The Bells of Peover is practically a whippersnapper by pub standards, but it's certainly packed a lot →

The highwayman's haunts

If you count hauntings, as well as physical visits, the most regular pub-goer of all time is surely Dick Turpin. The 18th-century highway robber was baptised in Essex, but was eventually executed in York for horse robbery aged only 33. Among the many pubs that lay claim to his presence are The Spaniards Inn, London NW3 (which is even rumoured to have been his birthplace); The Ostrich Inn in Colnbrook, Berkshire, where it's said he once escaped the authorities by jumping out of a window; and The Blue Boar in York, where his body rested after execution.



The Globe in Dumfries is where Robert Burns (*inset*) gained the inspiration for *The Gowden Locks of Anna*, meeting barmaid Anna Park

Arresting history: George 'Hanging Judge' Jeffreys hid in The Town of Ramsgate (*left*) in Wapping following the Glorious Revolution in 1688, but he was later captured (*above*)

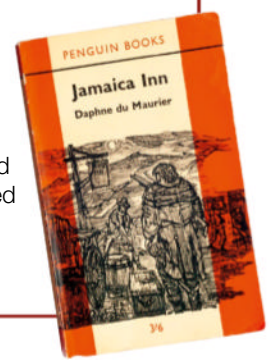
into its two centuries. Originally named the Warren de Tabley in tribute to a local lord of the manor, the current name is also a nod to well-respected locals (and not the church close at hand). The Bells were members of a local brewing family who ran the place for 55 years, until Alma Bell retired from the business following a chain of family tragedies. Peover's real moment in the spotlight, however, came during the Second World War. US Gen George S. Patton used Peover Hall outside Knutsford as his headquarters and, when Dwight D. Eisenhower (future US President, then commander of the Allied forces) joined him for secret strategy meetings, they lunched at The Bells of Peover. The unassuming upstairs room at this country pub became the office in which the D-Day plans were finalised.

Current landlord Phil Smith still flies both a Union Flag and the Stars and Stripes in front of the pub in commemoration, as well as displaying maps of the Normandy beaches and even Patton's diary from 1944, left open at the pages for June 5 and 6, of course. *The Cobbles, Knutsford, Cheshire (01565 722269; www.thebellsofpeover.co.uk)*

Landings zone: The Bells of Peover (*right*) was a haunt of Gen George S. Patton and Dwight D. Eisenhower (*below*) leading up to D-Day

Literary links

Forget writing retreats: it seems that pubs are the best place to deal with writers' block. You could argue that it began with Chaucer; *The Canterbury Tales* are almost a fictional pub crawl. Sadly, The Tabard in London's Southwark, the pilgrims' starting point in the poems, no longer stands, but its galleried neighbour The George Tavern stands on the site of an inn said to have been visited by both Chaucer and Shakespeare (who may have watched plays in its courtyard). In Oxford, The Eagle and Child was famously the meeting place for the Inklings, a group of writers that included J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. They shared work and were honest in their feedback; group member Hugo Dyson famously exclaimed 'not another ******* elf' as Tolkien read from an early draft of *The Lord of the Rings*. Wordsworth's poem *The Waggoner* was inspired by a 16th-century coaching inn now known as The Swan at Grasmere, which is one of the Lake District's oldest establishments. Another Swan, this time at Fittleworth in West Sussex, was popular with the 19th-century literati: a glance at the historic guestbook reveals the signatures of Rudyard Kipling and J. M. Barrie, as well as Constable and Turner. Jamaica Inn on Cornwall's Bodmin Moor inspired Daphne du Maurier's suspenseful novel of the same name and is known as one of Britain's most haunted pubs, said to be plagued by everything from disembodied voices to ghostly smugglers.



Super women

What can be learnt from the achievements of the world's greatest female designers and antique dealers? Who has created the most valuable legacy? What are the secrets of their success? Come and find out at an inspiring event on the first day of London Design Week at 10.30am on Monday, March 9, at the London showroom of luxury lighting brand Hector Finch

THE foundations of 21st-century design can be found in a wide range of creative and dynamic women whose careers flourished in an era when so many professions were dominated by men.

Nancy Lancaster, Rose Cumming, Dorothy Draper, Elsie de Wolfe and later Nina Campbell shaped classic design on both sides of the Atlantic, and Charlotte Perriand and Eileen Gray pioneered a more contemporary aesthetic in architecture and furniture design. In the world of antiques, Genevieve Weaver of Guinevere and Gretchen Andersen of the Lacquer Chest had a lasting impact on taste.

The success and influence of female designers will be the subject of a panel discussion hosted by COUNTRY LIFE at the Hector Finch showroom at Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour, London SW10, that will include the interior designer Henri Fitzwilliam Lay and Anahita Rigby, the founder of Tat London, Charlie Porter and Jennifer Manners, founder of the eponymous rug brand. The event will be moderated by COUNTRY LIFE's Giles Kime and hosted by designer Hector Finch.

When Monday, March 9
Time 10.30am
Where Hector Finch, 3rd Floor, Design Centre East, Chelsea Harbour, London SW10 0XE (020–7731 8886)
Entry Free, however, guests are asked to register at **www.dcch.co.uk**

Clockwise from above left: **A host of dynamic women influenced the direction of design, including Gretchen Andersen, Charlotte Perriand, Eileen Gray and Dorothy Draper**

From left: **Anahita Rigby, Charlie Porter, Jennifer Manners and Henri Fitzwilliam Lay will hold a discussion at London Design Week**

Simon Upton/Interior Archive; Alamy; Getty; Simon Brown/Country Life Picture Library/Future Plc

John Lewis-Stempel

A lapwing and a prayer

St Valentine's month may be bitterly cold, but the capricious charms of *Vanellus vanellus* never fail to warm the heart, says **John Lewis-Stempel**

Illustration by Michael Frith

AN awkward month, February, being neither winter nor spring—the middle child. Although it is the shortest month of the year, it is ignominious in having the worst weather. The coldest temperature ever recorded in the UK, -27.2°C, was at Braemar, Aberdeenshire, in February 1895. The Anglo-Saxons' appellate for the month was 'filldyke', after its habit also of drenching the land.

Yet, as if to protest any designation of being truly winter-belonging, in February the buds of sallow are silvery with spring growth and the snowdrops are resplendent whatever the weather gods fling down; in French the flower is *perce-neige*, 'snow-piercer'. Brimstone butterflies are afloat, as 'skylarks mount and essay to wing', as the Revd Gilbert White phrased it.

The Victorian Nature writer Richard Jefferies noted the month for the raucousness of rooks in his 1885 piece *Out of Doors in February*: 'In the slow dull cold of winter even these noisy birds are quiet, and as the vast flocks pass over, night and morning, to and from the woods in which they roost, there is scarcely a sound… But so soon as the waters begin to make a sound in February, running in the ditches and splashing over stones, the rooks commence the speeches and conversations which will continue till late into the following autumn.'

Balmy days are not unknown, enticing blackbirds and other birds to mate. Chaucer even determined in his poem *Parlement of Foules*, of about 1381, that St Valentine's Day, February 14, was the day on which the birds stand:

> Byfore the noble goddesse Nature,
> And ech of hem dide his besy cure
> Benygnely to chese or for to take,
> By hire acord, his formel or his make [mate].

St Valentine's Day—it's not only for human lovebirds.

In farming, you can't plan in February. You do what the weather will allow you to do. I stepped out this morning for the daily weather-gauging and into ambiguity and ambivalence. It was face-hollowingly cold and the woods around were spectral with hoar frost, each and every branchlet furred and fuzzed with ice. The water in livestock troughs required vandalism with a hammer to break the ice-topping. The blaring white sun was rising though, filling the misty vapour with radiance. From the stalactites along the edge of the tin roof of the barn descended drips of water that landed on the tarpaulin over the log pile, the sound like fingers faintly tapping a drum.

> 'In farming, you can't plan in February. You do what the weather will allow you to do'

In the furrows of the ploughed field up behind the house, miniscule runnels of water were slowly forming. One furrow was crested white, not with rime, but with the chests of perched lapwings. The environmental arguments against ploughing are solid—the process releases carbon dioxide and disturbs soil structure—but once in a while it has its place in the farmer's toolkit. Besides, the birds love it. It's not only rooks and gulls who follow the plough; in this past week, the turned red earth of Big Field has been picked over by 15 species, from herons to pied wagtails, although it is the band of 20 lapwings that catches my eye and heart.

If I had to nominate a poster bird for February in farmland it would be *Vanellus vanellus*, the lapwing, a bird of contradictions. It is the wader that happily inhabits farmland and in flight it tumbles about so that it appears black, then white. 'Lapwing', indeed, derives from Old English words for 'leap' and 'wink' to describe this erratic, flickering, floppy wingbeat. The lapwings in Big Field took off shimmering in the incipient sunlight. On a similarly gelid February day some years ago, in a moment of cold clarity, I understood exactly why lapwings flip belly-back, white and black in flight. It's a defence mechanism. I was ploughing in south Herefordshire, near my parents, and a sparrowhawk, its *haut en bas* almost tangible, swung around the field before aligning itself with the church tower so that it was lost in the background. Then it came for the pecking lapwings with its wings set still, as if suspended by wire, a child's malevolent bedroom mobile. The lapwings saw the killer only at the last moment, exploding into the air in a confusion of black-and-white

dots; it was like watching interference on the screen of an untuned monochrome television. Nothing formed or definite could be grasped and the sparrowhawk flew away with as much dignity as it could muster. The alarm noise the birds made was its own discouragement, a *wah-wah-wah*, such as might be emitted by human babies in distress, yet at such a decibel it obliterated the engine noise of the Ford 7600.

For such a gentle-looking bird, the lapwing has surprising wiles. If the nest, a scrape on the ground, is threatened, it may divert the predator with the pretence of a broken wing, dragging its body over the ground, and crying plaintively all the while. As the maxim in *The Compleat Collection of English Proverbs* of 1670 by pioneering naturalist and lexicographer John Ray avers: 'The lapwing cries most, furthest from her nest.' Chaucer also knew the lapwing's distraction technique, declaring the bird 'fulle of trecherye'.

Of course, any treachery is ours. Due to the intensification of agriculture, the population of lapwings in Britain and Western Europe is down by more than 50% since 1970. A primary factor in the decline has been the widespread switch from spring-sown to autumn-sown crops, which has dramatically reduced suitable nesting habitat. In the late 1990s, 39% of breeding lapwings in England and Wales were recorded on arable farmland, with 85% of these on spring-sown cropland.

The little flock of *Vanellus vanellus* on Big Field arrived in bleak midwinter, the very end of December. The February ploughing of Big Field is textbook lapwing-friendly 'spring tillage'. Will the lovely birds stay to nest in March? The heart hopes, the head is soberly realistic. After all, it's presently February, the month of uncertainties and inconsistencies. The month which has 28 days—but sometimes 29.

John Lewis-Stempel was twice crowned victor of the Wainwright Prize for Nature writing for 'Where Poppies Blow' and 'Meadowland'. His latest book, 'Night Life: Exploring Britain's Wild Landscapes After Dark', is out now (Penguin, £12.99)

Edited by Amie Elizabeth White

Do yourself a Favor

FAIRFAX & FAVOR'S SS26 collection is a treat for country, town and city wardrobes. Fickle spring weather is no match for the new range of waxed jackets, double-faced Sherpa fleeces and leather boots. As warmth arrives, expect soft suede sneakers and sandals, cropped tweed jackets (great with jeans and maxi skirts) and lightweight knitted polos. Colours are neutral or subdued, except for a pop of parakeet-green suede on a pair of loafers and matching tote. Some pieces in the collection, including this beautiful tailored Eliza jacket (£345, *right*), are already available, but they won't be for long (www.fairfaxandfavor.com).

Up the wall

Anybody who has been charmed by the beautiful wrapping paper from stationers The Kensington Paperie should take note that the company's bucolic prints are now available as wallpaper. 'The progression from wrap to wall felt entirely natural,' says founder and designer Fin Fellowes, 'as clients were already using our paper in their homes, for drawer liners or picture mounts.' Patterns are rooted in British heritage and our eclectic character—rich florals, gentle watercolours and, my favourite, Pudding (*bottom right*), influenced by small-scale Italian block printing, but illustrating row upon row of English steamed puddings. 'I was mid renovation when we decided to launch it and ended up using five of the designs in my own home.' Everything is printed in London and is fully recyclable, although offcuts make ideal drawer linings and picture mounts. £220 for 10m roll (www.thekensingtonpaperie.com).

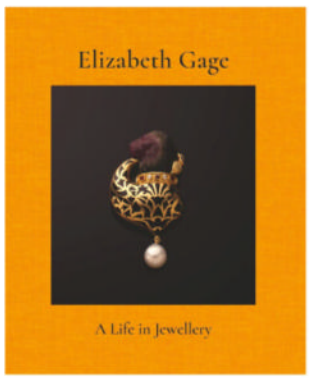
Little luxury

Pig hand & body wash, £24

BRAMLEY has collaborated with The Pig hotels—which you'll find dotted across the countryside in the South of England—on a product range inspired by the kitchen gardens and flora surrounding each property. The hand and body wash is made with all natural ingredients and essential oils, including chamomile, sage and rosemary—soothing, silky and quietly restorative every time you use it (www.bramleyproducts.co.uk; www.thepighotel.com).

To boldly go

A *LIFE IN JEWELLERY* is a new biography by William Grant delving into the story of British jeweller Elizabeth Gage, who is celebrating more than 60 years in the business. Renowned for colour and sculptural designs (her cabochon-cut stones are no stranger to these pages), it charts her meteoric rise in a male-dominated industry, from the 'aha!' moment in the British Museum, where a display of ancient, hammered gold rings led her to train as a goldsmith, to early trade shows, breakthrough commissions and the awards amassed along the way—including an MBE in recognition of her services to the British jewellery industry in 2017. Lavishly illustrated with stories, archival sketches and photographs, it is as bold as the jewellery itself. £50 (www.elizabeth-gage.com).



Tucking in

BRITISH menswear brand King & Tuckfield has cemented its burgeoning reputation with a serene new store on Mortimer Street, W1. Established in 2016 by Stacey Wood, the name derives from her grandmother, Joan King, a ballerina in the 1940s, and her father, Graham Tuckfield, a Yorkshire miner, paratrooper and ballet dancer, too. Their 'duality of grace and graft' is a blueprint for the brand, embodied in clothing that balances elegance and utility. Premium merino wool is the backbone, tailored into pleated trousers, shirts with exaggerated collars and caress-me-soft knitwear. Although retro inspired (particularly the short-sleeved polo shirts, a favourite among Hollywood stars, including Ryan Gosling and Chris Evans), the cuts are contemporary and carry a quiet, masculine energy. Palettes range from chocolate brown to chartreuse, made to be mixed and matched so dressing feels effortless. 'Our clothes are designed for people who value craft and calm… who want clothes that move across settings,' Ms Wood tells me. Lucky us, because we won't want to take them off (www.kingandtuckfield.com).

A royal touch

PRAGNELL has unveiled its new 'Origins' collection of jewellery inspired by a Court pattern discovered adorning the ceilings of the Tudor building the company occupies in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, during renovation. The design, created by architect Abraham Sturley with permission from James I, has been reimagined as a bold, symmetrical motif, hand carved into richly polished 18-carat gold and accented with diamonds. Striking bangles and delicate pendant necklaces can be stacked together and the cuff-style earrings (*pictured*) are a statement on their own. The royal connection continues, as a portion of the proceeds of sales will be donated to The King's Foundation to support its work promoting and protecting artisanal craft skills. From £2,650 (www.pragnell.co.uk).

Eternal sunshine

What does the warmth of spring smell like? If your answer is ylang-ylang flowers harvested in the Madagascan islands in 2024, sweet orange leaves, Italian bergamot, grapefruit and aromatic patchouli, then Colonia Il Profumo Millesimato, the latest cologne from Acqua di Parma, is for you. The release marks 110 years since the *maison*'s first fine fragrance and celebrates the spirit of Italian *arte di vivere* with an enjoyable ease. The sun has appeared. £250 for 100ml (www.acquadiparma.com).

Trading places

AUDEMARS Piguet has relocated AP House London to No 9 Clifford Street, a Grade II-listed building in the heart of Mayfair, W1. The new space, spanning nearly 10,000sq ft across four floors, has been beautifully decorated. Plush sofas, wooden panelling and homely details are coupled with sensitively restored original features, such as fireplaces and ornate staircases that were buried by decades of use as an office space. The first floor is a showcase of timepieces and archival material, whereas the second serves for hosting experiences, including live music sessions and whisky tasting. The result is a place into which you can really settle as the world ticks by outside (www.audemarspiguet.com).

Kensington Leverne

A few of my favourite things

Rankin

Rankin is a British photographer, publisher and film director best known for his striking portraits and fashion photography. He has photographed The King, Mick Jagger, Monica Bellucci and Mikhail Gorbachev, among many others, and he has published more than 40 photobooks. His work has appeared in magazines, including *Dazed*, which he co-founded, *Vogue* and *Esquire*, and has been exhibited in galleries from MoMa in New York, US, to the V&A Museum in London. He lives in London with his wife and dogs.

Edited by Amie Elizabeth White. Illustrated by Bryony Fripp

↑ Air fryer

I find it funny that people think air fryers are similar to microwaves. They are not. What they really are is control: heat, time and a clear end point. There's a health benefit to the simplicity. You use far less oil without thinking about it, making food lighter by default, not because you decided to be virtuous. Portions stay sensible because you are cooking what you need, not filling an oven out of habit. It is quick and low effort, so you are more likely to cook proper food rather than something processed out of convenience. A favourite is air-fried edamame.

← Time

The real luxury. Not endless time, and not time that has been aggressively optimised, but time with enough space in it to get bored. Boredom matters. It is where ideas turn up. Walking, travelling, sitting around (listening to a book), all of that creates mental breathing room, and I protect it quite fiercely now.

→ My dogs

I live with four of them, and every day I am aware that it's a privilege to share my life with them. They keep me sane and make sure I exercise. They force me out of my head and into the real world, regardless of what I think is urgent or important. They don't negotiate, which I appreciate. They give shape to my days and, without trying, make everything feel more human. They're not a lifestyle accessory, they're family. You don't own them, you look after them for a while, and in return they give you presence, affection and an uncomplicated love that's increasingly rare.

← Audiobooks

They are a godsend. I have always been a voracious reader, so this isn't some compromise, it is an upgrade. Listening to audiobooks has sorted my sleep, because they stop my brain from racing the second I lie down. I can walk the dogs and read at the same time or travel without feeling as if my life is being wasted in transit —long journeys are far less boring when you are inside a good book. Anybody who claims it 'doesn't count' is confusing the fetish of paper with the act of thinking. Hearing Robert Elms read *Blitz: The Club That Created The 80s* adds something that the printed page can't: cadence, memory, lived authority. It's closer to how stories used to work before we pretended silence was superior.

An eye to the future

What changes to a house do most to enhance its aesthetics, function, comfort, sustainability and longevity? On March 24, leading experts in architecture, interior design, craft and restoration will share the secrets to maximising possibilities and protecting value at Daylesford's magnificent Heritage House in Gloucestershire

Daylesford's Heritage House in Gloucestershire will play host to a COUNTRY LIFE panel discussion featuring five leading industry experts

FOR most of us, our homes aren't only the places we choose to spend our lives—but also our single biggest asset. The way we configure, design and maintain a house—and the materials we use to do so—affects both our enjoyment of a house and also its value. Because maximising these requires a holistic approach and the advice of experts in a number of disciplines, COUNTRY LIFE has invited five established figures, each with deep experience in their respective fields to talk: the architect Jonathan Dinnewell, the interior designer Sean Symington, the stone specialist Edward Smith of Artorius Faber, eighth-generation builder Tim Moulding and Joanna Cocking of Hamptons.

Collectively, they have been involved in restoring, building and enhancing houses of different styles and ages. At this reader event, they will offer advice on where resources are best focused. Is it better to extend or reconfigure existing space? What are the benefits of converting outbuildings? What is the secret to achieving thermal efficiency and creating sustainable energy? How can one design a house that will stand the test of time?

The event, which will include a two-course lunch, will include a panel discussion, a Q&A session and opportunities to discuss individual issues—and to explore Daylesford with its world-famous farm shop.

Date Tuesday, March 24
Time 11am–2pm
Tickets £65, to include a two-course lunch and a glass of wine. To book, telephone **01608 692871** or visit **www.daylesford.com/shop/events/upcoming-events/country-life-reader**

MEET THE PANELLISTS

From left: **Jonathan Dinnewell** is a director at Smallwood Architects and has worked with many of his clients for more than 40 years, often across multiple projects and generations. Much of his work focuses on historic and country houses and he is particularly interested in what gives these buildings longevity. **Sean Symington** leads his Cotswolds-based boutique interior-design studio. Known for interiors that balance classic design with a fresh, playful edge, his work is grounded in a deep respect for architecture, craftsmanship and the way people truly live now and for generations to come. **Edward Smith** is one of the founding directors of Artorius Faber, a specialist in bespoke British stone. This family-run business is based in Somerset and embraces a classic English sensibility, suited to both traditional and contemporary design styles. **Tim Moulding** is the eighth-generation managing director of one of the South's leading building companies, specialising in historic buildings and high-end country-house new build and restoration. **Joanna Cocking** has worked in the property sector in London and across the UK for almost 33 years, joining Hamptons in 2001. Leading the Prime Country Sales team and Private Office, she is ideally placed to advise for the full process of buying and selling.

Galloping ahead

Celebrate the Year of the Fire Horse—symbolic of strength, freedom and forward momentum—with bold gold and equestrian motifs

Styled by Amie Elizabeth White. Photography by Paul Zak

Clockwise from top: **The Archibald Pin in 18-carat yellow gold, jasper, South Sea Keshi pearl and 49 brilliant-cut diamonds,** £36,600, Elizabeth Gage (www.elizabeth-gage.com); **Iconica earrings in 18-carat rose gold with 206 white diamonds,** £15,800, Pomellato (www.pomellato.com); **Serpent Geneve bracelet in yellow gold, ruby and diamond,** £12,400, and **Severine small ring in yellow gold and ruby,** £6,580, both Cassandra Goad (www.cassandragoad.com); **horse and rider vintage brooch,** £3,500, G. Collins & Sons (www.gcollinsandsons.com); **baguette love earrings in 18-carat yellow gold,** £12,500, Bucherer (www.bucherer.com); **Iconica bracelet in 18-carat yellow gold,** £7,650, Pomellato (*as before*); **Sweet Alhambra watch in 18-carat rose gold and carnelian,** £17,100, Van Cleef & Arpels (www.vancleefarpels.com); **Coco Crush quilted motif ring in 18-carat beige gold,** £2,560, **Coco Crush quilted motif ring in 18-carat beige gold with diamonds,** £14,700, and **Coco Crush bracelet in 18-carat yellow gold,** £7,350, all Chanel (www.chanel.com); **silk scarves from a selection,** £149 each, Holland Cooper (www.hollandcooper.com)

RIDLE LEATHER FEED • 275 YEARS OF BRITISH CRAFT • ENGLISH BRIDLE L

No throwing stones

Gentle curves ensure that this greenhouse fits seamlessly into the corner of an Oxfordshire garden, finds **Tiffany Daneff**

Photographs by Clive Nichols

LUCKY the garden owner who has just the spot for an off-the-peg, ready-to-grow greenhouse. For the rest of us on bumpy, uneven and sloping ground or with inconvenient dimensions, the whole escapade becomes that much more tricky. Especially if the greenhouse is not going to be parked somewhere out of sight, but is to be a focal point. Who doesn't dream of a greenhouse-cum-conservatory-cum-out-of-the-wind spot to enjoy a little winter sun?

Petra and Luke Hoyer Millar live in Oxfordshire, where they have designed and cherished a spectacular garden behind their 1500s manor house. They'd always wanted a greenhouse to overwinter their collection of agapanthus and when planning the garden had marked out a particular corner where it would sit. They then designed the garden and herb garden around it. 'I also wanted to grow lots of fancy tomatoes,' says Mrs Hoyer Millar, who is the brains behind *The Dirt News*, an online horticultural news site. 'The problem is that none of the walls is straight and they meet at an awkward corner, which meant that the greenhouse would have to be bespoke.'

> 'It was far from a straightforward commission: the house is listed and the walls don't line up'

From the outset, they knew they wanted a clean and contemporary style that would at the same time look right with the house. 'We didn't want the finials or decorative details of the Victorian-style glasshouse.' Restricted in terms of height on account of the walls, the Hoyer Millars also wanted to ensure visibility from the neighbouring garden was kept to a minimum.

Initial online searches for an architectural greenhouse had left them dismayed. 'Then I found a picture of a glasshouse with this curved shape and knew it was exactly right,' explains Mrs Hoyer Miller. 'It has a very simple structure that basically encloses the two walls and looks modern, yet fits in with the house.' Eventually, they found a specialist in wooden glasshouses who could accommodate the site, but this was during covid and sales of off-the-shelf models were rocketing. Such a complex bespoke build was less appealing to the company and the Hoyer Millers were forced to look elsewhere.

'Using steel allowed for the curved shape we had in mind and, given how much time and money was going to go into this greenhouse, it made sense to construct it from steel, which would need less maintenance,' says Mrs Hoyer Millar. The curved shape not only looks good, it maximises the growing space. 'I also wanted the glass to come as near to the ground as possible and didn't want to see the low walls the glass usually sits on—although we did consider having cold frames on the outside to hide the walls.'

In the end, they contacted a Belgian company, DBG Classics, which seemed to offer everything they needed, although it wasn't clear at that point whether they would be able to ship the greenhouse to England. It was far from a straightforward commission: the property is Grade II* listed, requiring architect involvement and listed-building consent. The height of the glasshouse was dictated by the height of the existing stone walls, which did not line up with one another. To make matters worse, the walls ran at different angles, so there was an awkward corner (of more than 90 degrees), requiring an extra end section. 'The Belgians weren't at all fazed by any of it. They designed a cunning, tapered end section to align to the wall.'

In Europe, DBG installs the greenhouses for its clients, but as the company does not have a contractor in the UK, the greenhouse was to be delivered in kit form. To maximise →

Belgium-based designers DBG Classics shipped the greenhouse in kit form to England, where it was easily assembled

The nuts and bolts

- The glasshouse was made by DBG Classics in Belgium (00 32 478 529 454; www.dbgclassics.be/en)
- The stainless-steel frame will last longer than wood and was painted with Lamp Black from Little Greene paint (0161–230 0880; www.littlegreene.com)
- Building works and glasshouse assembly was by R. C. Spencer from Oxfordshire (01869 337150; www.spencerbuilders.co.uk)
- There are two vents at the top and two at the bottom of the glass, which can be opened by hand. Electric operation could have been installed, but the Hoyer Millars wanted to keep things simple
- Underfloor heating was an option, but a simple £300 plug-in (hanging) electric fan keeps the temperature above zero
- A water tap and simple uplighters were also installed by the builders
- Heritage tomatoes, basil, cucumbers and chilli seeds came from Real Seeds in Wales (07301 522112; www.realseeds.co.uk) and She Grows Veg in Essex (www.shegrowsveg.com)
- The crab apple was from Barcham Trees in Cambridgeshire (01353 720748; www.barcham.co.uk)

the height of the greenhouse and not impair views from neighbouring property, the Hoyer Millars opted to sink it, with stone steps that take you down into it.

Meanwhile, a local builder was instructed to build up the two stone walls to the same level, adding an extra couple of feet and repointing. Photographs of the finished walls, together with the approved plans, were dispatched to Belgium. That was it. No further briefing was required. Twelve weeks later, four massive steel frames—including the extra section to accommodate the awkward corner—plus the steel door, the glass, the mastic and the bolts were delivered on a huge lorry. 'It arrived beautifully—no broken glass. Then it was good luck and over to us.'

The same builders had prepared the ground, laying foundations, drainage and U-shaped beds in matching Marlstone around the perimeter of the glasshouse. Groundworks complete, they were now ready to erect the steel frame. This took one day, during which it was bolted into place and to the walls. The frames were painted and the glass was subsequently put in place. Lead flashing to keep out rain runs along the top of the structure and down the side, where it meets the other wall at the corner.

No bells or whistles: a tap, plug-in heater and manual vents mean there is less to go wrong

The result is a cool, contemporary glasshouse that has added the finishing touch to the herb garden. In winter, it provides the focal point and, in high summer, when taller herbs such as fennel, angelica, phlomis and foxgloves are in flower, it looks beautiful rising from behind their waving stems. The agapanthus spent a happy winter under glass and, last year, Mrs Hoyer Millar had more heritage tomatoes than she knew what to do with. A flowering crab apple, *Malus toringo* 'Scarlett', which opens from dusky-pink buds and produces small red fruits later in the year, has been planted nearby to give some shade, as the greenhouse is south facing and does get hot.

'We didn't want to put up shading in the greenhouse,' says Mrs Hoyer Millar, who has also planted a pretty white rose, 'Sally Holmes', on the side wall—making the new greenhouse as beautiful outside as it is useful and enjoyable within.

ALITEX™

GLASSHOUSES

British made at Torberry Farm, Hampshire. Delivered worldwide.

TO REQUEST A BROCHURE CALL 01730 826900 OR VISIT ALITEX.CO.UK

Let's be clear

Orangeries, glasshouses and furniture for enjoying the garden view, selected by **Amelia Thorpe**

↑ **Victorian classic**
Handmade in powder-coated aluminium and finished in Olive Leaf, the classic Victorian Lodge greenhouse features a mirror porch, from Hartley Botanic (01457 819155; www.hartley-botanic.co.uk)

↑ **Aiming high**
A vaulted ceiling and exposed timber trusses add character to this oak-frame garden room, as full-height glazing on three sides maximises natural light and open views, from Oakwrights (01432 353353; www.oakwrights.co.uk)

↑ **Room with a view**
This bespoke oak garden-room extension to a Grade II-listed farmhouse is designed to allow its owners beautiful views of their country garden and to introduce more natural light into the heart of the home (01384 296611; www.primeoak.co.uk)

→ **Sitting comfortably**
Made from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified teak, the comfortable Kelso lounge chair costs £2,725 plus cushions, from Munder Skiles (07973 622136; www.munder-skiles.com)

↑ **Set piece**
This elegant Cheltenham six-seater rectangular metal garden dining set features a steel-frame table with a galvanised finish and granite top, and carver chairs with showerproof cushions in Natural. It costs £3,585 from Neptune (01793 934011; www.neptune.com) →

HECTOR **FINCH**

Interiors

Lantern light
The glazed roof lantern in this timber orangery creates an elegant feature, offering sky views and plenty of natural light. Made by Westbury Garden Rooms from Accoya and Redwood laminated sections, the structure is finished in Birch from the Westbury paint range (01245 326500; www.westburygr.com)

Light extension
This light-filled garden room by Architectural Bronze, attached to a listed house, features real bronze screens and panels, capped with a solid roof. The metal's natural resistance to corrosion and strength ensures longevity, as its warm tones add depth to the design (01476 249494; www.bronzecasements.com)

Made to measure
This bespoke hardwood orangery is custom-made in Britain by David Salisbury and painted in Eagle Sight from the company's own collection of colours (01278 764444; www.davidsalisbury.com)

Glass sanctuary
Designed and made at Alitex's headquarters on the Hampshire/West Sussex border, the Thomas Messenger greenhouse is constructed from durable powder-coated aluminium to replicate the look of wood (01730 826900; www.alitex.co.uk)

Classical elegance
This bespoke structure by Vale Garden Houses includes a central dining room with a lead-covered glazed lantern and (*right*) an orangery painted in Wild Mink. Made from sustainably sourced timber with metal columns, the structure also features Vale's unique roof system, combining an aluminium frame with internal decorative timber detail (01476 564433; www.valegardenhouses.co.uk)

Social space
Designed and built by Julius Bahn, this tiled oak orangery features exposed oak rafters and two sets of three-pane bi-folding doors. It accommodates a spacious kitchen and dining area, ideal for relaxed indoor-outdoor entertaining on summer days (0344 417 1400; www.juliusbahn.co.uk)

Katie Pryde

David Salisbury

ORANGERIES & GARDEN ROOMS THAT TRANSFORM YOUR HOME

EXCLUSIVELY MADE IN BRITAIN

Request our inspirational brochure &
arrange a complimentary design consultation

01278 764444 | davidsalisbury.com

Visit our Chelsea Showroom

Arabella Youens

Northern beauties

Before the country-house market begins in earnest–which is later in the northern regions–three handsome houses are launched in the hope of catching the eye of eager would-be buyers

ALTHOUGH prime property prices in many southern locations remain below their pandemic peak, those in some parts of the North have fared better. According to Hamptons, northern areas, which recovered more slowly following the 2008 financial crisis, are now catching up after the surge in London values between 2010 and 2015. The North-West has seen up to 90% price growth over the past decade. Part of the reason is down to affordability. As Sam Gibson of Galbraith in Hexham, Northumberland, says: 'A budget of up to £1.5 million will secure you quite a grown-up house in the northern counties—that's not necessarily the case down south.' He reports that buyers' appetites for properties up to that value are healthy, but anything above is less so. 'We all have to look forward rather than backwards, and everyone acknowledges the difficulties of last year. Houses worth £2m in this part of the world are rare and, at this stage of the year, owners aren't convinced that they would get a warm welcome from prospective buyers if they launched onto the market right now when spring is still a long way off.'

Mr Gibson has no such concerns for four-bedroom Grade II-listed Hartlaw Manor, which lies a few miles south of the historic market town of Alnwick and is on the market for offers over £1.25m (01434 693693). Not only is the asking price within the current 'sweet spot', but the location is spectacular, with far-reaching views south across the Vale of Coquet to Longhorsley Moor and as far as Cresswell Point. 'It's a cinch to get to from either Morpeth or Alnwick and, for those who are doing the weekly commute to London, trains from Alnmouth to King's Cross take about 3½ hours.

> 'The price is within the current "sweet spot" and the location is spectacular'

Sitting within a hamlet, the house is secluded, but not isolated, which is ideal for many buyers, and central Newcastle is about a 40-minute drive.' The garden extends to just over an acre and includes an attractive walled garden, which is also Grade II-listed; a further 26 acres with outbuildings and an outdoor school are available by separate negotiation.

Renovated Hartlaw Manor near Alnwick in Northumberland is 'a new house within the envelope of an old building'. Excess £1.25m

There is another advantage that will attract would-be buyers to Hartlaw Manor: its condition. 'It's effectively a new house within the envelope of an old building,' explains Mr Gibson. The property originally formed part of Hartlaw Farm and was described in the early 18th century as 'a goodly house, on an eminence'. Over its long history, the house, which was originally constructed as a long and narrow dwelling, was divided into two, and later three, homes before being restored into one property. The current owner purchased the house in 2010 when it was in a state of disrepair. Since then, they have carried out a full renovation programme, adding a modern extension to the northern end to give it more depth. 'It has an EPC [energy performance certificate] of C, which is epic for an 18th-century house,' adds Mr Gibson.

Condition is a strong selling point for Helperby Manor, on the edge of the village of Helperby in North Yorkshire, which is on the market for offers in excess of £3.5m through Blenkin & Co in York (01904 671672).

The asking price is reflective of the more competitive market of Yorkshire's so-called 'Golden Triangle' of countryside that lies between Harrogate, Leeds and York. 'I know we're not meant to have favourites, but this is one of mine,' says selling agent Edward Hartshorne. 'I sold it to the current owners about six years ago and they've carried out a thorough renovation project—it's all been done.'

Helperby Manor is made up of more than 8,000sq ft of interior space. The reconfiguration and modernisation project was extensive. It involved reducing the number of bedrooms from 12 to eight, creating a large, light-filled kitchen/breakfast room that leads into a dining room and living room, converting the chauffeur's annexe above the coach house into a one-bedroom holiday let and turning the former stables into a gym. The owners installed 40 ground-mounted solar panels with a Tesla battery storage capacity of 13kW and there is underfloor heating laid throughout the ground floor. 'We've seen evidence of younger buyers turning their backs on rambling country houses in favour of something more compact,' notes Mr Hartshorne. 'This is an impressive house, but it's also very cosy and made for modern family living.'

The house was built in 1913 as a dowager house for Helperby Hall, the seat of the →

Above and below: **Helperby Manor occupies a secluded spot surrounded by nine acres of gardens and grounds on the edge of the North Yorkshire village of Helperby. Excess £3.5m**

The extensive grounds at charming Kirk Hammerton Hall in North Yorkshire feature a swimming lake with a beach and jetty. £4.95m

Milnes Coates family. It isn't listed and it stands on the edge of the village, which is actively supported by the Helperby estate, including through the provision of land for the creation of a new playground. There are sports grounds and a cricket club and many events centred around the village hall, including an annual beer festival in September. Amos & Welsh, a local micro bakery, operates a mobile version on Sunday mornings. 'People bandy the word around a lot, but the village has a really strong community. I've sold quite a few houses in the village over the years and it's a common refrain said by those who know it well. The great thing about Helperby Manor is that you're completely private, but can walk into the village.' The property comes with nine acres, including the parkland in front of the house, as well as formal gardens, an orchard and an area of woodland.

Helperby stands midway between the market towns of Easingwold and Boroughbridge and is an easy drive away from both Harrogate and York. 'Judging by the interest we've seen so far, I expect it will sell to someone from Yorkshire looking to move into this patch, which is known for its excellent schools, or from down south and returning to their roots. Of course, some buyers come to Yorkshire in search of somewhere completely isolated that warrants a huge chest freezer and a hardy 4x4 to cope with the long winters, but for those looking for accessible countryside, this is it.'

Only 12 miles to the south of Helperby lies the pretty village of Kirk Hammerton, home to Kirk Hammerton Hall, which is now being launched onto the market with Savills in York for a guide price of £4.95m (07816 372002). Grade II listed and set in expansive grounds, the house dates from the mid 18th century with late-19th-century additions. Again, the current owners have spent some time gently bringing the house up to date with a new roof, replacing or refurbishing windows and having the wiring and plumbing upgraded throughout. It measures more than 12,500sq ft, with seven bedrooms, four bathrooms and five reception rooms, and selling agent Ed Stoyle believes that it is one of the finest houses in the region. 'This house will suit a family who appreciates the style of the architecture, the proportions of the rooms and the setting in the Golden Triangle and who don't want to take on a house in need of serious work. It's a fantastic place to entertain family and friends and there's a good-sized annexe with its own kitchen that would suit guests, a nanny or a relative.'

The hall is surrounded on two sides by formal gardens, which have been arranged over different levels and bounded by mature hedging and tall brick walls. There is a more formal box parterre and Japanese-inspired garden close to the house, and beyond that lies a swimming lake complete with a sandy beach and a boating jetty. In all, the grounds amount to about 9½ acres.

Spacious main reception rooms are a feature of the 12,500sq ft Kirk Hammerton Hall

THIS AUTUMN, A *NEW* CLUB WILL OPEN IN BELGRAVIA

BESIDES THE BAR, club, and restaurant team, our committee has asked us to recruit some unique roles.

WE ARE NOW looking for the following positions:

✶ SPORTS TZAR ✶

WE ARE LOOKING FOR a remote-control warrior to oversee the sports displayed on our 9 screens at billiards club *Cues*. Their main responsibility will be to prioritise broadcasts of sporting events that align with the members' interests as sports fans.

**An encyclopaedic knowledge of televised sports is essential.*

◆ BUTTER SOMMELIER ◆

THE CLUB SEEKS a passionate person with a deep love for and understanding of butter. This individual will curate our butter assortment and assist in training staff using our silver butter trolley.

**An encyclopaedic knowledge of toast is essential.*

۞ A CLUB MATCHMAKER ۞

A CHARISMATIC PERSON *(willing to work late)* who can connect members looking to form lasting friendships or indeed find something more. You'll have an eye for opposites that attract and be fine-tuned to the spontaneity and sophistication involved in the perfect seating plan.

**An encyclopaedic knowledge of love is essential.*

Please share a cover letter and CV relevant to each role to: *eatplaylove@thepembrokeclub.com*

JULIA LLOYD GEORGE

40 years of unique British design with rare gemstones of exceptional colour

020 7373 5093 / 07976 276 867 | JULIALLOYDGEORGE.COM

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS 1985 - 2025

Julie Harding

Gorgeous Georgians

Constructed in the age of the Industrial Revolution and Jane Austen (give or take a few decades in some cases), each of these Georgian gems has withstood the passage of some 300 years and is now ready for its next chapter

←↑ Somerset, £1.95 million

The Yews started life as a medieval manor house—to which its original ceiling beams bear testament—but, in the mid 18th century, the five-bay entrance façade was added, with Hamstone dressings and quoins. The owners of this Grade II*-listed property still hadn't finished their expansive ways, however, and, in the 19th century, a 30½ft by 18¾ft ballroom was constructed, which today forms a bewitching reception room with eye-candy items, including a carved-oak fireplace, decorative ceiling cornice, an arched top window and French doors that lead out to a loggia where mature grape vines and jasmine grow. The seven bedrooms mean that this is a house made for entertaining or a large family. A further bedroom can be found above the original coach house beyond the main house and an added 'extra' (or a feature not often found intact these days) is a glorious Victorian glasshouse—a haven for plant enthusiasts, who will also love the 2¼ acres of gardens. The location, Curry Rivel, is perched on a ridge above the Somerset Levels, and it isn't only the landscape that is spectacular here: so, too, apparently, is the community spirit. *Jackson-Stops (01823 325144)*

→ Norfolk, £1.595 million

The origins of Home Farm House in Helhoughton reach back to Tudor times, but this home also has the distinctive symmetry, proportions and elegance of the Georgian period (1714–1830), including a brick façade, having been added to over the centuries. Exposed brickwork continues inside, in evidence in the kitchen, which has an island at its centre, complete with a bespoke inscription—'Home Farm House'—etched into the wooden worktop. This thoughtful approach can be found everywhere in this seven-bedroom home, such as the linked snug (the Tudor part of the house), where there is more exposed historic brick and ceiling beams, plus a deep inglenook fireplace for that constantly cosy feel. The ceiling is high in the drawing room (the Georgian part of the home), a room that also has an open fireplace, sash windows and original wooden shutters. A self-contained two-bedroom apartment can be accessed via a private staircase and, outside, a converted barn has two self-contained bedroom suites and is currently run as a successful Airbnb business. *Sowerbys (01328 801534)*

↑ Somerset, £795,000

Since it was designed by John Wood the Younger and constructed between 1767 and 1774, Bath's curvaceous Royal Crescent has attracted the great and the good. In fact, there have been plenty of illustrious residents and guests, not least the politician and slave-trade abolitionist William Wilberforce, who stayed at No 2 in 1798, and the poet and playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan (creator of *The Rivals*), who visited and later married noted soprano singer Elizabeth Ann Linley from No 11. The actor John Cleese purchased a basement flat in 2016, too, but sold it again two years later. The flat now listed for sale is on the ground floor and has two double bedrooms, as well as, according to the agent, a 'welcoming entrance hall [that] leads to a beautifully proportioned reception room featuring a period fireplace and views towards the Crescent lawns… Residents of the Royal Crescent enjoy access to the private Crescent lawn, separated from the public park by a traditional ha-ha, preserving privacy and uninterrupted views across Royal Victoria Park'. *Knight Frank (01225 325992)*

↑ Norfolk, £695,000

The sellers of pretty Primrose Cottage have used it as a permanent residence and it could lend itself to this role once again, but it would equally make the perfect weekend bolthole or a coastal retreat for holidaymakers with a potential income stream, for it is situated in the village of Thornham, which, with three pubs and a renowned deli, is a stone's throw from Brancaster Beach. An elegant red-brick façade greets visitors to this semi-detached cottage and, inside, they will find plenty of original features, such as wide Georgian floorboards, panelling, cast-iron bedroom fireplaces and working shutters. Upstairs, two double bedrooms both have en-suite bathrooms, and a kitchen, dining room and sitting room occupy the ground floor. Outside, the terrace is a sun trap on cloudless days. *Sowerbys (01328 730340)*

↑ Northumberland, £1.2 million

Train enthusiasts—or anyone else, come to that—will no doubt love Bradley Garden House, located in Wylam, for this village is the birthplace of the 'father of the railways', George Stephenson. He lived here until he was about eight, but he wouldn't have found his own very humble High Street House anything like the beautiful Bradley Garden House, where everything—including the three reception rooms and four bedrooms (over two floors)—has been sympathetically restored. This Georgian farmhouse, which was once the residence for the head gardener from the 18th-century walled Bradley Gardens, has a kitchen that is fitted with a bespoke, handmade Neptune kitchen by Bridgewater Interiors. Externally, the south-facing gardens are landscaped and a stone terrace is perfect for alfresco dining or sitting and soaking up the tranquillity. *Finest (0330 111 2266)*

If only I'd bought…

May 20, 1965

NORTH CORNWALL COAST

1 mile inland. 9 miles respectively north and south of Camelford and Bude.

SMALL GEORGIAN HOUSE

With attractive garden and **9 ACRES** sound pasture.

Sheltered position and fine southern outlook.

2 reception rooms, 5 bedrooms.

In excellent condition.

Main electricity.

Ample private water supply.

Mains '66.

Various good outbuildings.

IMMEDIATE VACANT POSSESSION £6,350

Could you guess the value? Try our house-price quiz every day at www.countrylife.co.uk/quiz

Dear Daphne

So alluring is the scent as it hangs in the cold air that no garden should be without a winter-flowering daphne. **Charles Quest-Ritson** picks the best

Photographs by Jonathan Buckley

WHAT is that wonderful scent in the winter garden—so sweet, so strong and so hidden from sight? Well, it could be a viburnum, or one of those new mahonias, or even the shrubby honeysuckle *Lonicera* x *purpusii*. Nowadays, however, it is equally as likely to come from a plant of *Daphne bholua*, an essential staple of gardens in winter.

Daphne bholua is a recent addition to our gardens. Although first introduced from Nepal in the 1930s, it was not widely taken up by the nursery trade until the 1980s, when some of the best seedlings were given individual cultivar names. Yet it is no exaggeration to say that it has transformed our winter gardens. The first flowers may appear as early as November and the last well into March, sometime even April.

Daphne bholua had a reputation at first for not being reliably hardy, but, with thought for a position where it will be comfortable, it will prosper in almost any garden. It is one of those plants that has benefited not only from climate change, but also from the selection of forms that are naturally hardier. This reflects its mountain origins: in the wild, it is deciduous and hardier at higher altitudes, but evergreen and less hardy if collected from lower down the mountainside. Many modern selections are both hardy and evergreen, although, like most evergreen shrubs, it sheds some of its leaves in spring.

> ‘We can expect a flurry of new varieties over the next 10 years’

Sir Peter Smithers grew *Daphne bholua* so successfully in his super-temperate garden on Lake Lugano in the Swiss Alps that it seeded itself all too freely. He wondered whether, in years to come, it might be so prolific as to be designated a noxious weed. Arabella Lennox-Boyd brought seed back from a visit to Sir Peter and raised a great number of seedlings that now populate the woodland at her famous garden at Gresgarth Hall in Lancashire.

***Daphne bholua* ‘Jacqueline Postill’ AGM, a particularly fine form with dark, mauve-pink buds and good evergreen foliage**

Almost all the plants of *Daphne bholua* in England today are descended from plants collected in the mountains of central Nepal, where they flourish in clearings in oak forests between 6,000ft and 10,000ft above sea level. The Nepalese have various medical uses for the shrub, but they also use it for making traditional *lokta* paper. However, the species has a much wider natural distribution and we will see a greater variation within the forms we find in our nurseries when more are introduced from such areas as Tibet, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Daphne bholua is widely reported to be happier on neutral or alkaline soils. That has not been my experience. I have grown it happily in chalk woodland, on greensand and on sandy clay—both acid in reaction. The truth is that it grows well on almost any soil that is never waterlogged in winter or likely to dry out in summer. Shelter from cold, dry wind is also important. Pinch out the young growths from time to time if you wish; this makes for a bushier plant. Daphnes do not need pruning, unless they have grown large enough to be a nuisance. Avoid hard pruning them, but, if you do so and the plant survives, it will produce useful suckers that you can cut off and grow on somewhere else—a useful trick because most are grown on their own roots.

Which are the best cultivars? Twenty years ago, I planted four in my winter garden: ‘Darjeeling’, ‘Gurkha’, ‘Jacqueline Postill’ and ‘Peter Smithers’. All flourished, but, five years later, I had no doubt that the best, all things considered, was ‘Jacqueline Postill’. That said, the differences between them are small—largely a question of the vigour of the plant and the colour of its flowers. All have an open shape with flexible stems and grow to about 8ft.

The RHS has given its Award of Garden Merit to two very fine forms that are readily available. The first is ‘Ghurka’, collected at 10,500ft and said to be particularly tolerant of low temperatures. Its dark, mauve-pink buds open to palest-pink flowers. The other is ‘Jacqueline Postill’, a seedling of ‘Ghurka’, →

with similar flowers, but perhaps slightly more of them, and rather more evergreen leaves that show them off.

Other good cultivars of *Daphne bholua* include: 'Darjeeling', an early flowerer, starting in November; 'Limpsfield', reliably evergreen; 'Peter Smithers', the best of Sir Peter's collections in Nepal; and 'Mary Rose', with darker flowers. Karen Junker's nursery in Somerset has recently introduced several new cultivars, too.

'Jacqueline Postill' is the most widely grown cultivar, but we can expect new forms in the years ahead that are even better—larger flowers, darker colours, denser growth (to produce even more flowers) and increased hardiness would all be regarded as improvements. Now, some breeders have also begun to cross it with other species, some with longer corollas or deeper colours. We can expect a flurry of new varieties over the next 10 years.

However, *Daphne bholua* is not the only species to flower in winter and fill the air with its penetrating sweet scent. *D. mezereum*, an English native, although not widespread, is tough, hardy and easy to grow. I can guarantee its hardiness because I have seen it flowering at 3,500ft in the Alps—first on the edge of pine-woods near Château d'Oex in Switzerland and then up the Roya valley in the Maritime Alps.

> 'I once saw it planted as a hedge all along the front of a cottage garden in Wiltshire'

Daphne mezereum makes a sturdy shrub, typically 3ft–4ft high, which flowers on last year's wood from mid February onwards. The flowers are a distinct deep pink, with a purplish tinge, and cling tightly to the stems, just below the apical buds that start into leaf at the same time as the flowers open. There is a pretty contrast between the pale, green, lanceolate leaves and the strong colour of the flowers encircling the stems. Their scent is very sweet and strong. It is a typical cottage-garden plant: I once saw it planted as a short hedge all along the front of a cottage garden in Wiltshire. The flowers are followed by round fruits, each with one seed in it—a 'drupe', say the botanists. They are quickly picked off by birds when they turn from green to bright red at the beginning of June.

There is also a white-flowered form known as *Daphne mezereum* f. *alba*, which is slightly more upright in habit, occasionally reaching as much as 5ft in height. Its fruits are bright yellow and no less attractive to birds. You need to collect seeds of both forms at the end →

Facing page: **One of several variegated forms, *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata' flowers from March through to June.** *Above:* **The deciduous *D. mezereum* is an English native—although it is rare in the wild—with flowers that usually appear before the foliage**

Left: **The useful *Daphne* x *transatlantica* Eternal Fragrance is a lovely plant that flowers repeatedly from March to November.** *Centre:* **Spring-flowering *D. cneorum* is a small, trailing alpine form with dark-pink flowers that likes well-drained, gravelly conditions**

of May when they are still green and sow them (best in a pot) immediately. I find I get 100% germination and that each form comes true from seed, probably because they are self-fertile. The seedlings are easy to grow on and should eventually be planted out in their permanent positions when they are about 4in in height—best done in May.

The only downside to most daphnes is that they are short lived, growing to their full height and flowering profusely—then suddenly dying, seemingly for no reason apart from their age. *Daphne mezereum* typically lives for 8–10 years and *D. bholua* up to 12 years. The wise gardener will always have spare seedlings to take their place. *D. mezereum* always produces a good crop of seeds from which to grow replacements and birds can be counted on to disperse them. *D. bholua* also produces seeds—fewer, perhaps, but quite enough to grow on a crop from which to choose. If you look underneath an established plant of *D. bholua*, you will probably find quite a number of seedlings, ready to take over when their parent plant dies. The seedlings will be variable, but all will make good garden plants—there is no such thing as a disappointing daphne.

Why do they have such a strong, sweet scent if they flower at a time when there are so few

Right: ***Daphne burkwoodii*** **'Somerset Variegated', a variegated form of 'Somerset' that flowers from March to May. Although winter-flowering daphnes fill the dark days with wonderful scent and colour, many are short lived, so it is wise to nurture some spare seedlings**

insects to pollinate them? The answer is that the climate where *Daphne bholua* occurs in the wild is milder and there are always insects to do duty. It is, however, self-fertile, as is *D. mezereum*. Neither of them needs a pollinator to set good seed. Why, therefore, do they both let out such a powerful scent, the sort that attracts insects from afar? Nobody knows. There is no end to the mysteries surrounding daphnes. Nor of their beauty.

Heaven scent

There are many strongly scented, excellent and easy daphnes that flower at other times of the year. Consider *Daphne* x *burkwoodii* 'Somerset', neat, short and highly fragrant from March to May; *D. odora*—the many variegated forms are superb—in flower from March to June; *D. cneorum*, an Alpine shrublet for well-drained soil, flowering in April-May; *D.* Perfume Princess in late winter, a hybrid between *D. odora* and *D. bholua*; and *Daphne* x *transatlantica* Eternal Fragrance AGM, which repeat-flowers from March to November.

Isabel Bannerman

Bewitched and bewildered

IN the swelter of last summer, a coolly white iris called 'Immortality' bloomed until the end of October. This was a rhizomatous, bearded or 'Germanica'-type iris, a group of sunseekers providing generous dobs of colour from the iridescence of the rainbow to smudgy embers. The Sibericas are more shade-accepting, less gaudy and a tiny bit uptight in form. Both groups flower in summer, but have useful sword-shaped leaves throughout the year that offer, in painterly terms, a vertical thrusting mark against sleepy mounds of perennials. In theory, irises can be picked from November (Algerian and Lazistan iris) until late summer. Where I get muddled is with bulbous irises, which flower from now until midsummer.

Far from home: the 'English' iris, *Iris latifolia*, adds a burst of colour to its native Pyrenees

Bulbous irises come in three groups, of which *Iris reticulata* is the most familiar. These bulbs wear a netted tunic or reticule—like a string bag around the bulbous larder that sustains them in the gasping summers of Asia Minor. Their enamelled blooms, a hand in height, consort with solitary bees in spring. All iris flowers employ a miraculous symmetry, formed in threes—standards, falls and the strap petals—to seduce pollinators and gardeners. 'Harmony' and 'Cantab' are mostly blue, but 'Clairette' and 'Blue Note' have dazzling indigo falls, flaked white. 'Katharine Hodgkin'—azure dashes on lemon, like Monet's kitchen—is the most reliable for spangling through dead winter beds. Mr B thinks their strangeness is best appreciated grown on the kitchen table.

The second group—similar, but more rarified—is the Juno species, whose heartland is Afghanistan. Flowering in April, they like a loamy, neutral, well-drained situation. The most straightforward of these to grow seems to be *Iris bucharica*, a glistening, white triangulated flower with striking yellow falls on a knee-high stem. Twice as tall, but less outstanding are the pale-blue flowers of *I. magnifica*. They form good-sized clumps, according to bulb guru Christine Skelmersdale.

> "English" iris are not remotely from these isles, but from the Pyrenees

The third group of bulbous irises is confusingly named English, Spanish and Dutch. The latter were bred, by the Dutch, from the *soi-disant* English and the genuinely Spanish *Iris xiphioides* in the 20th century. The first Dutch, a cultivar named 'Wedgwood', was followed by blends of bronze, cinnamon, yellow, azure and milky white—less Staffordshire, more polychrome Delft. Manipulated to flower all year round, they became the florist's iris, familiar on the garage forecourt, which makes them feel slightly unethical for today's gardeners. However, as garden flowers, they can be encouraged to return perennially. We experiment with Dutch iris and tulips in plastic pots sunk into large terracotta pots, which are lifted for drying. Try them in raised beds as you would asparagus, at a finger's depth, or at the base of a sunny wall. The rhapsody of bohemian named varieties—'Picasso', 'Gypsy Beauty', 'Paris Violet' and 'Tiger Mix'—take up little room, their grassy foliage disappearing as with daffodils. Loving their dabs of pure pigment, Monet grew irises at Giverny in France, in thin beds, never over-shadowed, but with columbines, tulips and forget-me-nots.

Our only native English irises are the waterside 'flag' (*Iris pseudacorus*) and the Gladwyn (*I. foetidissima*). The bulbous so-called 'English' irises—*I. latifolia* (*I. xiphioides*), *I. anglica* and *I. xiphium*—are not remotely from these isles, but from the Pyrenees. Baffling, but they were first named botanically when 'discovered' near the Bristol gorge in the late 16th century. Much later, botanists concluded they were Spanish, brought perhaps by Spanish sailors, young muleteers from the 'high peaks hoar', as Hilaire Belloc wrote of the Pyrenees in his poem *Tarantella*. Sturdy leaves push up before the snow melts and, in July, their tall flowers embroider the dusty meadow grass, a reminder that Nature does perennials-with-grass with such élan. They will naturalise here, given a moist neutral soil, but are difficult to find. Anna Pavord says in *Bulb* that by 1808 there were 47 varieties listed by one Haarlem nursery, but only six were in the RHS *Plant Finder*. We planted them in the orchard at Trematon in Cornwall—'King of the Blues' and 'Mont Blanc', from Parker's Dutch bulbs. We wish to do the same here, but cannot find them. Parker's offers instead a 'modern selection' ('King Mauve', 'Mickey Gold', 'Miss Saigon'), which they say 'surpasses' the old with better blooms and hardy longevity. It cannot confirm until July whether 'King of the Blues' and 'Mont Blanc', will feature in the autumn catalogue. Here's hoping that, if they do, every one of you will ring and ask for them.

Isabel Bannerman is, with her husband Julian, a leading garden designer (www.bannermandesign.com)

Next week Melons

Horticultural aide-mémoire

Start dahlias

The dahlia requires our attention at intervals. This is one of them, the beginning of the whole exercise. Retrieve those dingy boxes of tubers from their winter quarters, perhaps the darkness of a shed. Congratulate yourself on your secure and legible labelling. Then, bring the box into the light in a cool glasshouse and tidy the contents as necessary. Fill the box with enough compost to support life, then water the lot. From now on, look in when you're passing and water as required. Soon, green shoots will appear and you will have the pleasure of taking cuttings. **SCD**

Alamy; Getty

FORBES
&
LOMAX

INTRODUCING MATTE BRASS
forbesandlomax.com

VALE GARDEN HOUSES

FOR THE FINEST CONSERVATORIES,
ORANGERIES AND ROOFLIGHTS

ENHANCE YOUR HOME AND LIFESTYLE

For our inspirational brochure call +44 (0)1476 564433
or visit valegardenhouses.com

Kitchen garden cook Cauliflower

by Melanie Johnson

Cauliflower-cheese crumpets with smoked salmon

Ingredients
Serves 8

For the crumpets
8 crumpet rings
Or
225g strong white-bread flour
225 plain flour
14g fast-acting yeast
2tspn caster sugar
A large pinch sea salt
500ml whole milk, warmed
200ml warm water
1tspn bicarbonate of soda
150ml warm water

For the cauliflower cheese
1 cauliflower, in florets
40g unsalted butter
40g plain flour
500ml whole milk, warmed
1tspn Dijon mustard
Nutmeg, freshly grated
150g cheddar, grated
20g Parmesan, grated

To serve
200g smoked salmon and chopped chives (optional)

Method

1 Homemade crumpets are so much nicer, but you can buy them if short on time—in which case, skip to section 4. To make them, whisk together the flours, yeast, sugar and salt in a large mixing bowl. Pour over the warmed milk and water, whisking until smooth. Cover with a clean tea towel and leave somewhere warm to rise for an hour.

2 Once the batter is well risen and puffy, combine the bicarbonate of soda with the 150ml of warm water and whisk this through the mixture. Mix well and you should have a batter the consistency of single cream. Leave for 10 minutes (but no longer or the raising agents won't be as effective).

3 Grease the crumpet rings and arrange on a lightly greased non-stick frying pan over a low-to-medium heat. Ladle batter into the rings until it is 1cm (almost ½in) deep and then cook low and slow until bubbles have formed and the surface appears cooked. Remove the crumpets from the rings and return them to the pan for 30 seconds to finish off the tops. Set aside on a wire rack to cool (they also freeze well).

4 Blanch the cauliflower in boiling salted water for 5–6 minutes and then drain well, reserving a few tablespoons of the cooking water to use at the end to make the sauce glossy.

5 Melt the butter in a heavy-based pan and then sprinkle over the flour. Mix well until it smells biscuity. Over a low heat, slowly whisk in the warmed milk, whisking until smooth before each addition. Cook gently for a few further minutes, but do not let it boil.

6 Remove from the heat and stir in the Dijon mustard, nutmeg, freshly ground black pepper and a little of the reserved cooking water. Still off the heat, add the grated cheese and gently stir it through until melted. Fold through the cauliflower florets.

7 When ready to serve, toast the crumpets (buttering them if you're feeling indulgent), spoon over the hot cauliflower cheese, and finish by draping over smoked salmon and sprinkling with chopped chives. Serve immediately.

Another idea with cauliflower

Harissa-roasted cauliflower with red-pepper hummus

Cut a small cauliflower into florets and toss with olive oil, harissa, smoked paprika and seasoning. Either roast or air-fry in a moderately hot oven until it's tender, but still retains a bite. Process roasted red peppers (I use ones you can buy in a jar) with a can of chickpeas, 2 tablespoonfuls of tahini, 1 clove of garlic and a generous squeeze of lemon. Spoon the hummus onto a serving plate and top with the roasted cauliflower florets and fresh herbs. Serve with flatbreads or as one of several sharing plates.

Melanie Johnson

Assessments & Valuations | Hand Cleaning | **JAMES BARCLAY** | Repairs & Restoration | Uplift & Delivery

At James Barclay we have many years experience in preserving and restoring all types of handmade carpets and rugs. We recommend your Persian & Oriental carpets & rugs are cleaned every 5-7 years & repaired every 8-10 years. Our team of specialists will appraise your rugs and offer expert advice and guidance. From small prevention repairs to large scale restoration, we can advise you on all types of repair work.
Call us now on **0203 174 2427** for uplift and advice.

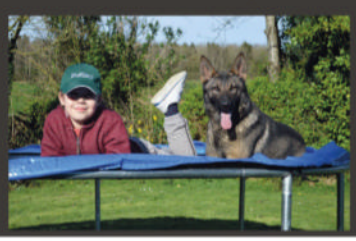
Leading Britain's Handmade Oriental Rug Tradition for Three Generations | We cover the whole of England and Wales

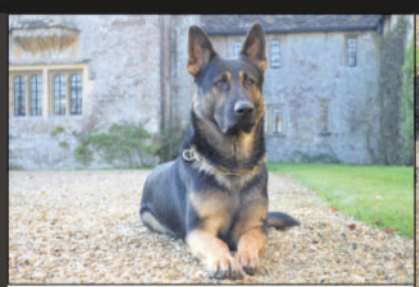
020 3174 2427 | info@jamesbarclay.co.uk | jamesbarclay.co.uk

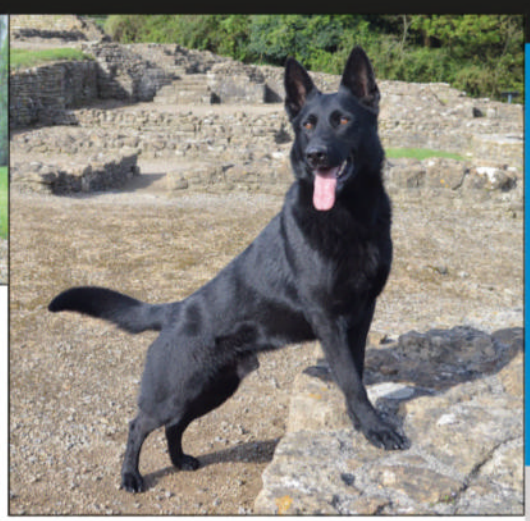
K9 PROTECTOR
THE SWORD AT YOUR SIDE

01761 240754

Protection Dogs UK







Family Protection Dogs

K9Protector has a team of experienced staff that are former home office, police and civilian trainers. The dogs supplied by K9Protector integrate seamlessly into your family life and live with you as your family pet.

However, as CEO Alaster Bly describes them, they are very much a "pet with a toolkit built in". This tool kit is the ability to react when commanded, and sometimes when not, to fearlessly defend those in their charge. All family protection dogs go through a rigorous testing and training regime from breeding, selection, socialization to training. Those that complete the program are available to be purchased as family protection dogs.

I first started the business seven years ago after seeing the development of personal protection dogs in America says CEO and head trainer Alaster Bly. At the time I was serving as a police constable and dog handler in Wiltshire Police. We are now supplying around 280 fully trained dogs per year to families all over the UK and abroad.To find out how a family protection dog benefit your family visit our website www.k9protector.co.uk.

Brown study

Beloved of everyone from prime ministers to Sir John Betjeman, brown sauce—arguably Britain's favourite piquant condiment—has a wonderfully rich history, writes **Harry Pearson**

Ruling class: HP Sauce remains a worldwide favourite, selling 28 million bottles each year

Getty; Alamy

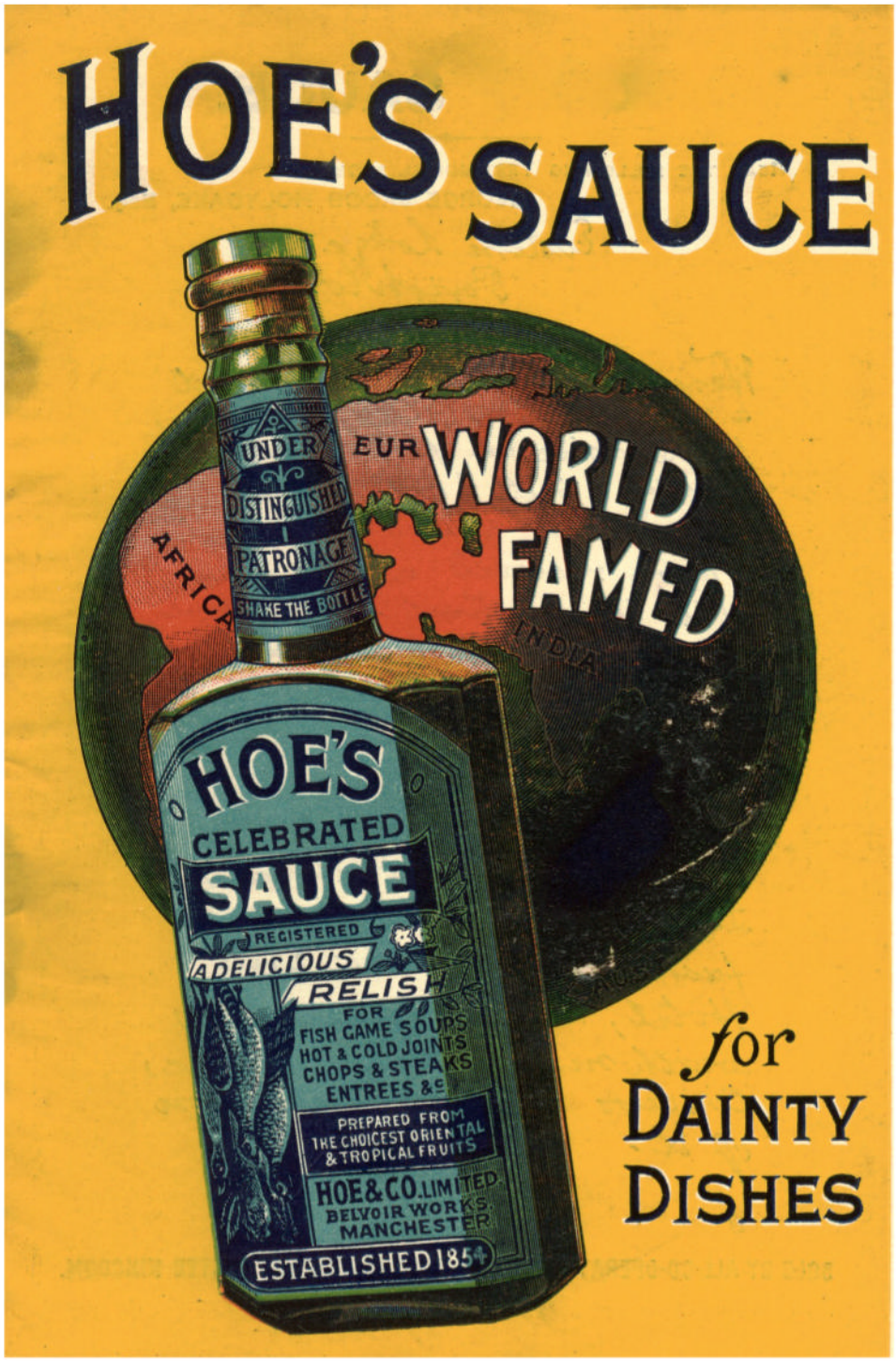
ENGLAND,' wrote Voltaire, 'has 42 religions, but only two sauces'. We may dispute the great philosopher's figures, but it is certain that, if our nation did have only a pair of sauces, one of them would be brown.

Brown sauce is the most British of condiments and the English East Midlands can claim to be its epicentre. In Bottesford, Leicestershire, a company founded by David Hoe may have (we speak advisedly, because the origin of brown sauce is the subject of fiercer debate than the Kennedy assassination) produced Britain's first commercial brown sauce sometime in the mid 19th century. Hoe's sauce was advertised as being patronised by 'the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Rutland and members of the Melton Hunt'. It is possible the recipe drew inspiration from a traditional condiment thickened with elderberries and sometimes called Pontack Sauce. The godmother of English food writing, Florence White, notes that this elderberry-based sauce was often associated with Melton Mowbray—and, in particular, with Sir Charles Sedley, a keen hunting man whose country seat was a few miles away in Rutland.

Hoe's claim to being the progenitor of brown sauce is disputed in Nottinghamshire. In New Basford, Frederick Garton began making his Banquet Sauce in the 1880s. His recipe was a product of Empire, blending tomatoes, tamarind, molasses, dates, soy sauce and spices with malt vinegar. On discovering it was being served in the restaurant at the Palace of Westminster, Garton rebranded his product as Houses of Parliament Sauce, trademarking the name in 1895. That, at least, is the official story. Condiment conspiracy theorists posit a counter-narrative in which an inveterate gambler named Harry 'HP' Palmer sold his recipe for Famous Epsom Sauce to Garton to pay off his debts.

Whatever the truth, in 1903, Garton was in hock himself and offloaded his sauce and trademark to the Midland Vinegar Company of Birmingham. With a stable home at last, HP Sauce was set to conquer the world; its global status celebrated by the description on the bottle label, written in both English and French (the legend '*La Sauce HP est un Melange du Haute Qualite*' would remain until 1984).

It is possible that Brands of Piccadilly had marketed its A.1. Sauce (the name is alleged to have been given to it by George IV) even before Hoe and Garton and Crosse & Blackwell of Soho unleashed a sea of piquant condiments in the 1840s that included Sir Robert Peel's Sauce, the first—but, as we shall see, not the last—sauce to be endorsed by a British Prime Minister. Later additions to the brown-sauce firmament included



Checking sauces: Hoe's Sauce makes a—hotly disputed—claim to be the first of its kind

Hammonds Chop Sauce, Daddies Favourite Sauce (originally Daddie's; the baffling apostrophe was dropped at about the time that National Service ceased) and OK Sauce (an underwhelming name that suggests the firm might also have released a Par-for-the-Course Pickle).

Despite scepticism among our European friends, brown sauce is hugely popular in other parts of the world. Most OK Sauce is exported to South-East Asia, whereas A.1. enjoys great popularity in Taiwan and the US (where it was advertised, fittingly, by the singer Meat Loaf). In Japan, *tonkatsu* (breaded pork cutlets) comes accompanied by a thick, fruity brown sauce developed in the 1940s. Although recipes incorporate distinctly un-British ingredients such as *mirin*, the resemblance to our own brown sauce is uncanny—a little touch of the English chippy in the neon Tokyo night.

In Britain, brown sauce became ubiquitous during rationing, giving a welcome boost of what the Japanese would call *umami* to bland wartime food, or 'helping out the odds and ends and putting everyone in a good humour', as Daddies adverts claimed. In 1940, John Betjeman captured the national mood when he wrote of giving 'the HP Sauce another shake' in his poem *Lake District*.

Sales were given a further lift in the 1960s when Mary Wilson, wife of Prime Minister Harold Wilson, told journalists that her husband's only vice was 'drowning everything in HP Sauce' (the media started calling brown sauce 'Wilson's gravy').

> 'Harold Wilson's wife said his only vice was "drowning everything in HP Sauce"'

Today, sales of HP Sauce comprise a whopping 28 million bottles per year. It might be a national success story, except that, in 2006, owners Heinz announced it was moving production to mainland Europe. In a tacit tribute to his predecessors at No 10 Downing Street, then Prime Minister Tony Blair supported a 'Save our Sauce' campaign. Alas, it failed: this great staple of our island's cuisine, which once billed itself as 'The Official Sauce of Great Britain', is now made by the Dutch. Please feel free to put aside your bacon sarnie and boo.

In the post-war rationing era of bland dishes, Daddies set about 'helping out the odds and ends and putting everyone in a good humour'

The land of saints and seals

In our new series exploring the best places to visit in the UK, **Mark Hedges** journeys to Cornwall's wild and ancient coastline

Three Mile Beach

CORNWALL, the land of saints, is divided into two different types of devotees or Kernowphiles: those that love the north with its beaches and surfing (my wife, Rachel's, family) and those who prefer the south for its gardens and peace (me). It's Padstow versus St Mawes. In November, Rachel drove a bit further down the A30 than normal to Gwithian Beach, as I took one of the most beautiful train journeys in Britain to St Erth, before we joined up to stay at Three Mile Beach. Here, at the toe end of Cornwall, both points of the compass are so close that you can walk from one side of the county to the other in an afternoon. There is no need for a north-south divide.

> 'You will feel renewed by the peace and sea air'

We stayed in one of the 19 beach huts with Tiger (a dog bed is supplied, as is just about everything else you could imagine you might need). Each hut has a New England-meets-Poldark feel, sumptuously kitted out with a wood-burning stove, mini Everhot cooker and the types of natural products that put a big smile on Rachel's face. Outside, in the tightly fenced, slightly claustrophobic courtyard is a hot tub, sauna and barbecue, where one evening we made pizzas from the kit left for us on arrival.

This is a place for a romantic escape, avoiding all the intrusion that hotels bring. You can, of course, order delicious food to be delivered or cook your own. It is the best of both worlds: you can have as much service or solitude as you like. There are surf schools to join or massages to enjoy for those seeking relaxation. Whatever your penchant, you will feel renewed by the peace and sea air. *A two-bedroom beach shack at Three Mile Beach costs £600 for a three-night stay (01736 805981; www.threemilebeach.co.uk)*

The superbly equipped huts at Three Mile Beach provide the ideal base for a coastal escape

Dogs will have the time of their lives at Three Mile Beach, with sea and sand on the doorstep

Getty; Panoptic Group Ltd

Need to know

There was no view of the sea from our room, which was a great shame, as the sea is so close that we could hear it. It is, however, a paradise for children and dogs. There are wonderful walks—the hotel lies on the South West Coast Path—in every direction from the hotel. You could spend the whole week setting off in different directions and never repeat a step. The hotel provides an exceptionally well-produced book listing all the local activities and directions. There is also the possibility of being picked up by the staff from a nearby station, but, to get the best out of a stay here, you really need a car.

The area has a proud mining heritage; tin and copper were dug from the earth. There is no mining today, but the remnants of this once-great industry are still visible as chimneys rising above the abandoned sunken shafts. There are Bronze Age remains to be found in the sand dunes and ancient Celtic chapels around the village of Gwithian; nature reserves abound for ornithologists—guillemots, razorbills and cormorants nest locally—and the striking Godrevy Lighthouse that inspired Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* stands proud at the eastern end of the beach. If you are very lucky, you may see dolphins in the bay; you are almost guaranteed to see seals.

Experience the very best of Cornwall at St Ives—remarkable history, panoramic views of the sea and a traditional Cornish afternoon tea

Where to eat

Cafés abound in the area, but we particularly enjoyed Godrevy Café after a morning walk for breakfast. Lots of things are home-made, including the lemon curd. Go upstairs for the best views of the sea and choose the bacon sandwich. You cannot better Carbis Bay Hotel for a full-on, Cornish afternoon tea with panoramic views of St Ives Bay and we enjoyed the simple, fresh, cheerful pub food at The Old Forge, Lelant.

What to do while you're there

Surf The sea here is good for all abilities. When we were there, the waves, pulled inexorably bigger by the full moon, lured many locals from their beds at dawn

Walk There's a truly exceptional offering of beach walks on golden sand, historic walks around the old tin and copper mines and pub treks, all while taking in the freshest air and admiring the wildlife, from murmurations of starlings to singing oystercatchers

St Ives Founded in the 5th century by an Irish monk, the pretty town has a rich history of fishing, mining (*Books, page 122*) and, more recently, art, with artists drawn to the particular light reflected from the water onto the sands. Visit Tate and the Barbara Hepworth Museum

Visit The Lizard, the southernmost point of the British mainland; Mousehole for cobbled streets, its harbour and charming granite cottages; The Minack for its world-famous open-air theatre built into the cliffside; and the tidal island St Michael's Mount, the English counterpart of Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy

'Only a sibyl can outstare the sun': Leonard Baskin's haunting woodcut that illustrates *Facts about the Sibyl* by Ruth Fainlight

In her write mind

Sibyls, the book born of Ruth Fainlight's poems and Leonard Baskin's prints, became a memento of friendship, beauty and sorrow for its author

THE sun was setting on the 1970s when artist Leonard Baskin began looking for a poet. His hand had been stirred by the Sibyls, the prophetesses of Greek mythology, and he sought verses that could match his drawings. His first instinct was to ask Ted Hughes, whom he knew well: the two had met in 1958 and Baskin had not only gone on to illustrate *Crow*, which the writer considered his masterpiece, but, in 1974, he had also moved with his family not far from Court Green, Hughes's house in North Tawton, Devon. The poet, however, turned down the project and instead recommended someone else: Ruth Fainlight. 'She is quite knowledgeable about such subjects and I think she would like this,' Ms Fainlight believes he told Baskin. 'It would really grab her.' It did: 'Leonard showed me these drawings he had done and they immediately took hold of my imagination.'

Blu Tack no more: the poet at home with her framed and treasured Baskin prints

Born in New York to Jewish parents, Ms Fainlight had already started writing poetry when, in her early twenties and having left the US, she met in a Nottingham bookshop Alan Sillitoe, who had been recovering from tuberculosis. He had served in the RAF and his pension allowed the couple to live in France and Spain and pursue writing careers. In 1960, Sillitoe won the Hawthornden Prize for *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and it was through that award that he and Ms Fainlight befriended Hughes—who would receive the same accolade a year

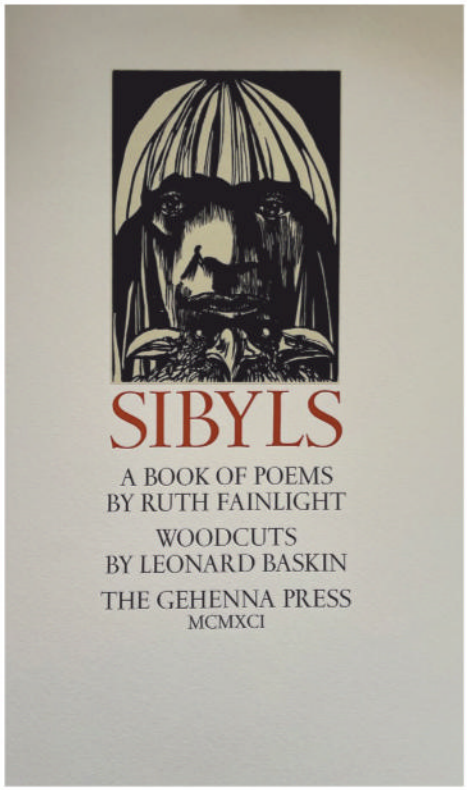
later for *Lupercal*—and Sylvia Plath. Tradition was for the award to be handed from the previous winner to the new one: this Sillitoe and Hughes did at a ceremony in St James's Square, which was also attended by their respective wives. 'We took to one another right away,' recalls Ms Fainlight. 'See, Alan and Ted were both stars at the time, both Northerners and both working class—there was that parallelism and Sylvia and I had quite a different sort of parallelism, but very strong. We were both Americans, we both had very successful husbands, much more successful than we were, and we were both poets. We were caught between being writers' wives and writers.'

> 'Leonard showed me these drawings he had done and they immediately took hold of my imagination'

Although they moved to Devon a month or so after that meeting and separated a year later, Hughes and Plath remained in touch with their new literary friends. In 1963, Ms Fainlight, then in Tangier, Morocco, was planning a get-together with Plath when she discovered the poet had killed herself. 'Our plan was to go to her house in Devon. She was living in a flat in London and had her babies with her, and I thought I could take my Moroccan maid with us specifically to look after our children—Sylvia had two, I had one—so we could go out for walks, talk and work. Then my husband came back to the house with the previous Sunday's *Observer* and, when I opened it, there was a picture of Sylvia with a big black line all around it.'

Despite the terrible shock, the friendship with Hughes endured and that is how Ms Fainlight became involved in Baskin's project. Her sibyls turned into metaphors for poets, seers who are different, set apart, who have words that burst from their mouth by instinct, rather than reason, but who are also special and, in their own way, powerful: 'Only a sibyl can outstare the sun', as she would write some years later.

Baskin loved the poems: 'And of course,' says Ms Fainlight, 'I was delighted that he responded so enthusiastically.' The plan, or at least, the hope, was for a book to be published featuring her verses and his pictures, but the artist's New York gallery had different ideas. 'They sold off the prints and the book was never made. And I thought…' Ms Fainlight pauses—the choice words that sprang to mind at that time are, she laughs, 'not fit for COUNTRY LIFE to publish'.



Long in the making, the 1991 book *Sibyls* at last brought art and poetry together

Instead, she included the poems in a subsequent collection, *Sibyls and Others*, which found great acclaim, so when Baskin asked her whether she would like to write a second round of verses to go with his latest Sibyl illustrations, she was game. However, there was a snag. Ms Fainlight was about to leave Britain for the US, where she was set to become Poet in Residence at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. 'Lenny said: "That's OK, I'll send you prints"—so I had these Sibyls, which I stuck up on the wall of my apartment with Blu Tack.'

The quality of the hanging may have been sub-par—she has since remedied and, today, the Baskin prints sport elegant frames, hanging in pride of place in her sitting room and her study—but she loved writing the second set as much as the first and this one had the destiny it deserved. *Sibyls*, a limited-edition book that combined the talents of both poet and artist, was published in 1991 by The Gehenna Press, the fine-art press Baskin had founded in 1942 a copy is available through Peter Keisogloff Rare Books in the US).

Now, Ms Fainlight is selling, through Shapero Rare Books (www.shapero.com), the vast collection of tomes she and her husband amassed over the decades, but her treasured copy of *Sibyls* is not part of that—indeed, she has tucked it away to ensure it isn't accidentally carted off with the other volumes. She has many reasons for keeping it with her: 'I think it is the most beautiful object, I think my poems are good and the images are striking. The subject is very compelling. And it has so many associations: Leonard and his family, Ted and Sylvia. Yes, of all the work I have done with artists—good artists, very good artists—this is the one that means the most to me.'

Of men and mice

Although he is now best remembered as a painter, John Everett Millais—who became president of the Royal Academy (RA) 130 years ago this month, only to die that August—had an equal talent for illustration. He was prolific, turning his hand at poetry (Alfred Tennyson's) and novels (Anthony Trollope's *Orley Farm*), as well as literary magazines (*Once a Week*). By 1928, however, his style had fallen out of fashion, leading literary critic Forrest Reid to lament the fate of publications such as *Good Words*—which featured drawings by the late RA president (*right*), as well as John Tenniel, Walter Crane and Edward Burne-Jones—engraved by the Dalziel Brothers: 'Given over to mice and damp, while Cruikshanks and Rowlandsons are treasured under lock and key, I have seen copies of this book stacked away in the lumber room of more than one shop.'

WEIRD & WONDERFUL

'I BEG you to mention this trip to nobody,' Claude Monet wrote to art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in 1884. 'It isn't so much that I want to keep it a mystery. It's just that I want to do it on my own.'

The Impressionist artist was heading to Bordighera, on the Italian Riviera, and was especially keen that Pierre-Auguste Renoir not know of it, because otherwise he'd join and they'd 'play tourist', instead of working. The three weeks Monet planned to stay in the village quickly turned into three months, during which he got to grips with the strong Southern light and discovered new motifs, not least the garden of Francesco Moreno, a landowner who collected rare plants: 'It is pure paradise. It seems all the plants in the world grow effortlessly from the soil there; you find a jumble of every variety of palm tree, orange and mandarine trees.'

Monet painted from sunrise to sunset. It didn't always come easily to him—'my God, this infernal country is so difficult,' he wrote to his partner (and later wife), Alice. Despite this, and despite her increasing annoyance at his absence, he remained in Bordighera until early April, all the time painting and despairing that he would never finish his pictures to his satisfaction. 'I do not know whether what I did is any good. I no longer know anything; I have worked so much, and tried so hard that I am losing my head,' he lamented. 'When surrounded with such dazzling light, one finds one's palette rather poor. Here, art would need tones of gold and diamonds.'

Then, when he finally decided he was done—or rather, that he would never be done—he nearly risked having to leave his paintings behind, as Italian customs insisted he needed a permit to take them out of the country, even though he had made them himself. Luckily, he squeaked them through and one of them later caught the eye of another artist: John Singer Sargent, who bought it in 1891. Now, *Maison de jardinier* is included in Sotheby's Modern & Contemporary Evening Auction, together with works by Paul Signac, Fernand Léger and Edgar Degas. It will go under the hammer on March 4 with an estimate of £6.5 million–£8.5 million—a rare chance for collectors to acquire a picture painted by one *fin-de-siècle* luminary and owned by another.

Take five: steps to make a bed

IN 1998, a bed challenged Britain's view of art. Tracey Emin, then only in her mid thirties, but with a lifetime's worth of traumatic experiences behind her, had already made waves with her confessional work, such as *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963–1995*, a blue tent inside which she had affixed 102 names (not all lovers—the title was literal and the list included Dame Tracey's grandmother). However, it was *My Bed* that made her a household name across the world.

1. The idea for the installation came when, after a bad break-up, the artist remained abed for four days, asleep or semi-unconscious, not eating, but drinking heavily. 'When I eventually did get out… [I] couldn't believe what I could see; this absolute mess and decay of my life, and then I saw the bed out of that context of this tiny, tiny, bedroom, and I saw it in just like a big, white space,' she said in a 2015 Tate Gallery video. 'I realised that I had to move the bed and everything into the gallery space.' The installation, in its unkempt state, encapsulated her emotions at a time when she was feeling suicidal. Yet, it also conveyed a message of resilience, because she had ultimately left her bed to move on with her life

2. Shortlisted for the Turner Prize and shown at Tate in 1999, *My Bed* caused outrage, so much that the museum had a stock reply at the ready to address complaints: 'Tracey Emin, while controversial, is a well respected contemporary artist of the younger generation and already has an international reputation—*My Bed* was shown in... New York and Tokyo earlier this year'

3. It did little to assuage the furore. Some women decried *My Bed* for promoting slovenliness: 'It makes me so angry to see these so-called artists glorifying a messy bedroom,' one complained to *The Sun.* Under a headline, 'The pits of the art world', that left no doubt over the newspaper's view, the *Yorkshire Post* thundered: 'Calling such advanced sluttery art is plainly indulgence of the most infantile.' Even one of the artist's local papers, the *Kentish Gazette*, wondered: 'But is it art?'

4. Judging from her later career, the answer would appear to be 'yes'. Although in 1999 she lost the Turner Prize to Steve McQueen, she became one of Britain's most celebrated contemporary artists, collected by the global great and good (not least singer Madonna, who visited her studio earlier this year). She was elected a Royal Academician in 2007, appointed CBE in 2013 and eventually made a Dame in 2024. As for *My Bed*, it was snapped up by Charles Saatchi in 2000 and later sold at auction in 2014, when it made more than £2.5 million

5. Since then, Dame Tracey has continued to share her life openly through her art, never holding back from confronting difficult or traumatic experiences, as a major exhibition at Tate Modern, 'Tracey Emin: A second life', now highlights. The title marks the faultline before and after cancer and the surgery that saved her life. The show documents both periods through more than 90 works—with the notorious bed as the centrepiece

'Tracey Emin: A second life' is at Tate Modern, London SE1, from February 27–August 31 (www.tate.org.uk)

The Leonard Baskin Art Trust; Shapero Rare Books/Silke Lohmann; Peter Keisogloff Rare Books; Alamy; Sotheby's; Tracey Emin. All rights reserved, DACS 2026. Photo credit: Courtesy The Saatchi Gallery, London/Photograph by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd

COUNTRY LIFE ARCHIVE

Browse, search and purchase images directly from the fully digitised COUNTRY LIFE picture library

More than a quarter of a million images of British culture and heritage

COUNTRY LIFE has charted the changing face of the nation for the past 128 years. Its unrivalled photographic archive encompasses art, architecture, social history, royal houses, landmarks, gardens and more

Registered users can now browse and purchase digital image files directly from the site for personal or research use, exhibitions, publishing and other licensing options

To purchase or license any images, please register at:

www.futurecontenthub.com

Contact: licensing@futurenet.com

SCAN ME

IN 1733, the Queen's Gallery at Kensington Palace acquired a new object of curiosity: a mechanical model of the solar system. Commissioned by the Queen Consort, Caroline of Ansbach, it was the creation of Thomas Wright, mathematical instrument-maker to the King. Wright's orrery was not new: he had remodelled an earlier one already in George II's collection and from Caroline he received the large sum of £336 for 'making all the Machinery and Wheel-Work to perform the Motions of all the planets… to the Great Orrery'. His handsome, gilt-metal-decorated instrument included all the planets then known: Earth, Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, as well as the Sun and the Moon.

By 1733, Queen Caroline's enthusiasm for science was well known. She had wooed Sir Isaac Newton, increased the pension paid to Astrologer Royal Edmond Halley, attended lectures at the Royal Society (founded in 1660 by Charles II to promote 'Physico-Mathematicall Experimentall Learning') and, following a series of experiments in which she took a close interest, agreed to the inoculation of her children against smallpox, at the time a new and widely mistrusted procedure. For her

Reaching for the stars

Such was George III's passion for astronomy that he had an observatory built to observe the transit of Venus. Although his interest remains unrivalled, scientific curiosity gripped the Royal Family for centuries, as **Matthew Dennison** reveals

Great minds: showcasing technological advance was one of the principal aims of the Great Exhibition held in Hyde Park, London, in 1851

favourite son, William Augustus, she ordered that a laboratory be made in the cellars of St James's Palace, where the 10-year-old Prince also had his own printing press. In 1734, accompanied by her children, she visited the natural history collections assembled by Queen Anne's former doctor Sir Hans Sloane and afterwards corresponded with him on the subject of botanical taxonomy.

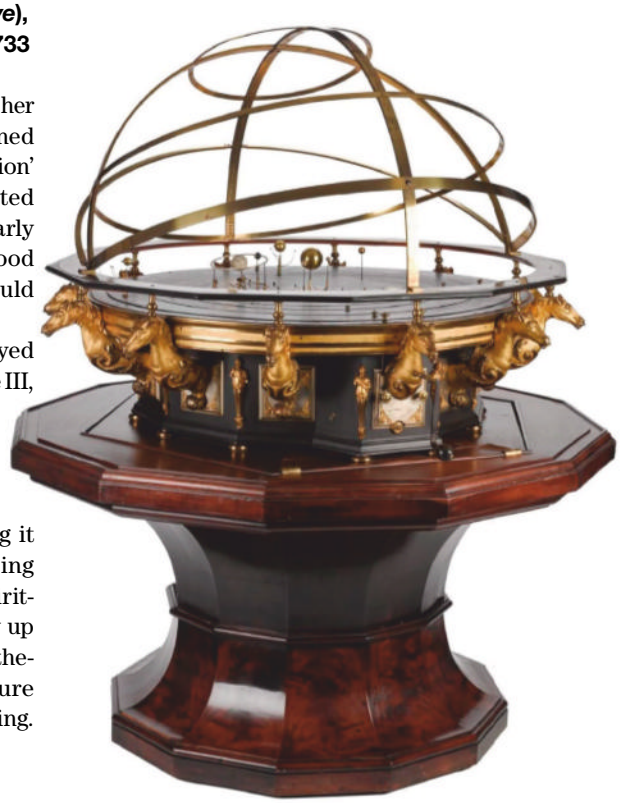
Caroline's fascination may have been unusual for the period, in which, with few exceptions, science was widely regarded as a male preserve, but in the annals of royal history she is one of several figures who took a keen and questioning interest in science and scientific progress, adding equipment and treatises to the collections in palaces and royal residences.

Historically, royal education typically involved some instruction in science, although this was not always entrusted to a specialist. →

A great interest in science prompted the Queen Consort, Caroline of Ansbach (*above*), to pay £336 for a handsome, decorated orrery (*right*) for her husband, George II, in 1733

In June 1544, John Cheke was appointed tutor to the future Edward VI. He was chiefly renowned for his knowledge of Greek. His remit was to teach the prince 'of tounges, of the scripture, of philosophie and all liberal sciences', and it is clear that the 'liberal sciences'—which included geometry, arithmetic and astronomy—were neither his nor the young Edward's primary concern. Cheke was also among those responsible for the education of the future Elizabeth I. Her sharp intellect embraced wide-ranging interests, including, briefly, alchemy, as well as new scientific knowledge and gadgetry, the last evidenced in her ownership of a brass astrolabe for calculating the time. Presented to Elizabeth in 1559, it was made by Thomas Gemini, a Netherlandish copper-plate engraver who had begun his career plagiarising the anatomical drawings of Andreas Vesalius. However, if Elizabeth had hoped to hear of advances in scientific knowledge during her visit to Cambridge in 1564, she was destined for disappointment. The 'learned disputation' by students staged in her honour consisted of a debate in Latin on two motions clearly close to the young men's hearts: 'simple food is preferable to complex' and 'dinner should be more generous than lunch'.

By contrast, a focus on geometry played a part in the education of the future George III, a feature of the broader moral training devised for the then prince by the Earl of Bute. Geometric problems were considered as an exercise that encouraged the Prince to identify truth by tracking it through the extended chains of reasoning that were part of such calculations. Dispiriting as this sounds, the young King grew up with a genuine interest in science and mathematics that not only occupied his leisure time, but shaped his patronage and collecting.



The appliance of science: George III grew up with a great appreciation of science and mathematics that led to the commissioning of a host of scientific instruments—and an observatory at Richmond in London

A good egg

George III particularly enjoyed gadgets and contrivances. Included in a silver-gilt breakfast service presented to the King by his daughters Augusta, Elizabeth, Mary, Sophia and Amelia on his 66th birthday in 1804 was an elegant egg boiler (*above*) capable of cooking up to four eggs at a time. It consists of a cylindrical container for boiling water raised above a spirit burner; eggs would have been lowered on a wire frame into the container. The handle features an hourglass equipped to time three minutes—exactly long enough for boiled eggs of the soft consistency the King preferred.

Perfect circle: the Battenberg Course Indicator, designed in 1892 to track the position of ships in relation to one another in convoy

In 1761, he commissioned from London's finest scientific-instrument-makers a selection of pieces used for demonstrating and proving diverse theories, including an air pump made by George Adams employed in the study of gases—among other things, Adams's pump proved that the removal of air from around an object prevented the transmission of sound made by that object. The same maker also supplied a philosophical table, equipped to enable the royal student to carry out experiments that confirmed theories of mechanics, in particular the relationships between matter, motion and forces.

The King then went a step further, commissioning not simply scientific instruments, but—driven by his love of astronomy—an entire observatory at Richmond, now part of Greater London. Halley had predicted that, in 1769, Venus would cross between the Earth and the Sun, enabling astronomers to calculate the distance →

Royal approval: Prince Albert's passion for science gave rise to the 1851 Great Exhibition, the profits from which aided in the creation of the Science Museum and Royal Albert Hall

Above: **A double-barrelled air pump and reservoir fashioned by George Adams formed the centrepiece of pneumatics apparatus commissioned by George III in 1761.** *Below:* **Adams, the appointed instrument-maker to the King, was also commissioned to make this mahogany, ivory and brass philosophical table in the early years of George III's reign**

between the two. The King's observatory was designed by architect William Chambers and completed in time for George and his wife, Charlotte, to witness the transit of Venus on June 3 (*'A seat of science', August 13, 2025*). Delighted with the new building, the King requested that his grandfather George II's orrery, remodelled at Queen Caroline's request, be moved there from Kensington Palace. He displayed it alongside 'some excellent mathematical instruments… [and] excellent apparatus for philosophical experiments' that were used not only by George III himself, but in his children's education. Many years later, a clergyman and amateur clockmaker, the Revd George Tough, presented the science-loving monarch with another orrery, chiefly made from engraved glass. It remains in the Royal Collection.

Unsurprisingly, science was well represented in George III's extensive collection of books. Among titles listed in the catalogue of his library at Kew Palace, compiled in 1780, was a two-volume guide, *American Husbandry*, published in 1775 ('Containing an account of the Soil, Climate, Production and Agriculture of the British Colonies in North America and the West Indies'), a 12-volume French survey of natural history and, under the subject heading 'Medecina', handbooks including Robert James's lengthily titled 1743 guide: *A medicinal dictionary; including physic, surgery, anatomy, chymistry, and botany, in all their branches relative to*

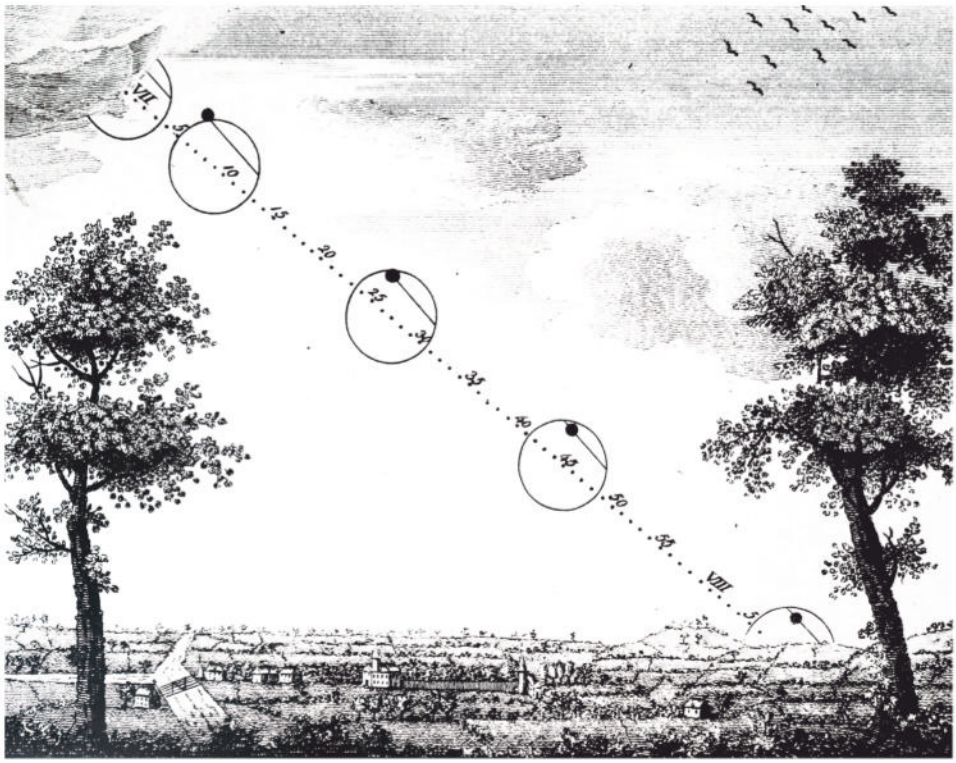
medicine. Together with a history of drugs; an account of their various preparations, combinations and uses; and an introductory preface, tracing the progress of physic, and explaining the theories which have principally prevail'd in all ages of the world. Despite a troubled relationship with his heir, the future George IV, George III did pass on to his eldest son aspects of his scientific curiosity. Following the death of scientific-instrument-maker George Adams, the Prince of Wales appointed Adams's son his optician.

> 'George III did pass on to his eldest son aspects of his scientific curiosity'

A passion for science also animated Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, enriching both the Royal Collection and London itself. Technological innovation was a key focus of the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Prince's brainchild. The exhibition's profits contributed to the building of the Science Museum and the Royal Albert Hall, which initially hosted regular science lectures and displays, such as the demonstration of a Morse Code link between Britain and Persia offered by the Society of Telegraph Engineers in 1872. In 1851, scientific and technological exhibits in the Crystal Palace included the most up-to-date telescopes, a prototype submarine, hydraulic presses and a revolving light for lighthouses. High-quality, but inexpensive lacquered brass microscopes exhibited by the Sheffield-based Chadburn Brothers manufactory were so admired by the Prince that he subsequently rewarded the company with his Royal Warrant.

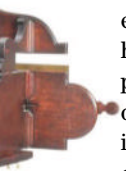
Albert also took an interest in the displays of photography and photographic equipment, as the medium had intrigued him since the early 1840s. The displays in 1851 encouraged him to expand his fledgling collection of photographic prints that, by the time of his death in 1861, had grown to more than 10,000 items. Among that collection today is the 1855 charming *Study of a Young Boy* by Hugh Welch Diamond, a man unusual among early photography enthusiasts. A catalyst for his passion was his role as superintendent of the female department at Surrey County asylum. Diamond became convinced that patients' facial features revealed their mental state and that photographs of their faces and expressions were, therefore, valuable tools for diagnosis. He expounded this hypothesis in a paper presented in 1856 to the Royal Society of Medicine, *On the Application of Photography to the Physiognomic and Mental Phenomena of Insanity. Study of a Young Boy* is quite different from such harrowing images, an engaging Chardin-esque composition that shows its subject holding a glass container, sitting at a table on which are arranged several pieces of scientific equipment. Diamond was a founder of the Photographic Society of London, of which Prince Albert became a patron, contributing £50 towards research into causes of the fading of photographs, one of his particular concerns.

Engineering, industrial design and conservation were among areas of scientific knowledge and research that captured the attention of another Prince Consort, the late Duke of Edinburgh. Unsurprisingly, Prince Philip, a former naval officer, also interested himself in navigational aids. Absent from the Royal Collection, however, is the Battenberg Course Indicator, designed in 1892 by the Duke's maternal grandfather, Prince Louis of Battenberg, who served as First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy. Prince Louis's gadget was intended to track the position of ships in relation to one another in convoys, a very practical application of science guaranteed to appeal to his sailor-scientist grandson.



The transit of Venus in June 1769, shown over London in a contemporary engraving, enabled astronomers to calculate the distance between the Earth and the Sun

Left: **An 1855 *Study of a Young Boy*, from Prince Albert's collection of photographic prints.**
Right: **As an ex-naval officer, the late Duke of Edinburgh was interested in navigational aids**



Alamy; Lawrence Steigrad Fine Arts, New York/Bridgeman Images; King's College London, The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum/Creative Commons Zero; Royal Collection Trust © His Majesty King Charles III, 2026/Bridgeman Images; Philip Mould Ltd, London/Bridgeman Images; Getty

Huon Mallalieu

We will remember them

One day this month saw the sale of the medals of a naval war hero and the collection of a long-serving art critic with a keen eye for pictures

Fig 1: **Chief Petty Officer Ellingworth's medals, including a George Cross (*left*). £99,200**

EVERY now and then, a saleroom story comes in that may not be strictly speaking 'art market', but is so poignant that I cannot let it go unrepeated. On February 11, Noonans, the Mayfair specialist coin and medal auctioneer, took £99,200 for Chief Petty Officer Reginald Vincent Ellingworth's set of eight medals (***Fig 1***), including his posthumous George Cross (GC), the first of the kind awarded directly to a naval rating.

Ellingworth signed up as a Boy 2nd Class in 1913, aged 15, and he served at Jutland and later in submarines before being pensioned ashore in 1938. At the renewed outbreak of war, he was recalled and he volunteered for bomb and mine disposal, working as a team with Lt Cmdr Richard Ryan, who was also awarded a posthumous GC. In 1940, they were key figures in disarming magnetic and parachute mines, principally in London, where there was so much to be done that they took rooms at the RAC Club. When apparently inert, such weapons could often be reactivated by as little as a footfall.

Ellingworth's son Donald recorded their last meeting: 'I had turned up after Dunkirk, where, in the chaotic evacuation, I had been posted "Missing, Believed Lost in Action". My father must have been relieved to see me because he gave me an enormous hug. I was a little taken back. It certainly broke the ice and, for the first time, we spoke man to man as we shared a pint and our experiences. "One thing is certain, son," he warned me. "If anything does go wrong, I won't know anything about it." I had never felt closer to my father.'

On the night of September 20–21, Ryan and Ellingworth were caught out by a parachute mine in Dagenham; the first man to reach the bodies noted that Ellingworth 'had a proper smile on his face'. His medals were bought by a collector who particularly wanted a GC as a symbol of the greatest heroism.

I don't know whether my old colleague John Russell Taylor, who died at 90 last August, had a boyhood shrapnel collection like many of his contemporaries, but he was a born collector, acquiring his first Old Master at the age of 12. February 11 also saw the 'white glove' sale of 324 lots of his paintings, drawings and illustrated editions at Olympia Auctions, with 80 more to come in an online session. Taylor was widely informed, as happy to share his

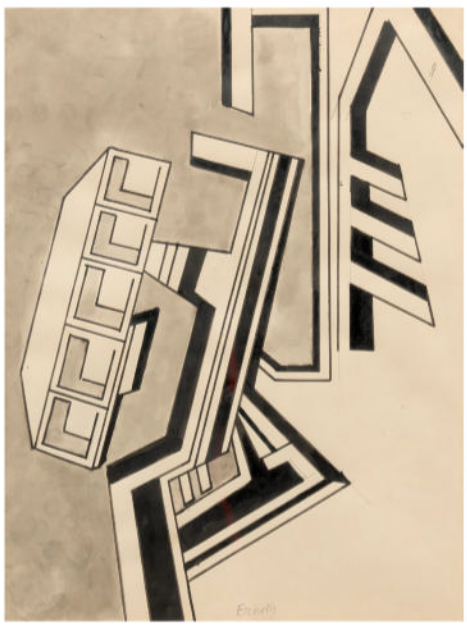


Fig 2 left: ***Vorticist Composition*** **by Frederick Etchells.** *Fig 3 right:* **Futurist etching *Returning to the Trenches* by Nevinson. Each £35,000**

Noonans

knowledge of Hollywood, Italian divas, recordings or royal gossip as his precisely calibrated views of art and artists, making him a fascinating companion, albeit sometimes an embarrassing one on public transport. He collected with love, mostly mid-19th-century to modern British and European artists, at times taking a picture as fee for a catalogue essay. Despite occasional misses, his eye was keen, especially for what was temporarily out of fashion.

The range of prices, and those white gloves, tell the story. At the upper end were an impression of C. R. W. Nevinson's *Returning to the Trenches* **(*Fig 3*)** and *Vorticist Composition* **(*Fig 2*)**, by Frederick Etchells, each at £35,000, followed by a cool, green *Cornish Landscape* **(*Fig 4*)**, 1936, by Richard Eurich at £30,000. At the lower level, buyers of £50 paintings and £10 books should be pleased with themselves.

Next week **Fun of the fair**

Fig 4: ***Cornish Landscape*, 1936, by Richard Eurich (1903–92). £30,000**

Pick of the spring

• In March, Marthe Armitage will be 96 and a (non-selling) retrospective of her work will open at Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery (March 19–July 19). Sir John Soane's country house at Ealing, London W5, is a suitable setting, only a mile or two from Chiswick, where her Dutch parents settled in 1939 and she designed her first wallpapers for her married home, and Brentford, where she later ran her business. Her first paper design was Angelica, taken from plants on the Chiswick riverbank. She studied at Chelsea School of Art, but gave up painting with motherhood. Eventually joined by her daughter Joanna Broadhurst, she produced handmade papers in greater numbers, but it was only in 2004 that she realised that 'well, perhaps…they are something'. Subsequently, printed on a press a little older than herself, they have been described as the best in the world. In 1993, Mrs Armitage was Master of the Art Workers' Guild, a worthy successor to William Morris (1892), also a sometime Chiswick resident.

• Although she has been a popular writer and illustrator of children's books since the 1980s, Emma Chichester Clark has not had a selling exhibition in 40 years. This will change next month, when her watercolours will be on sale in Suffolk. Her show, 'There's Always a Dog', will run at the Aldeburgh Gallery (March 5–11), alongside the annual Aldeburgh Literary Festival (March 5–8), where she will be artist in residence.

• Three years ago, Richard Ballinger's last show with Jenna Burlingham in Kingsclere, Hampshire, was a sell out; now, his 'Broken Light' exhibition offers 30 newly completed

landscapes (*above*; March 21–April 11). For him 'colour, line and composition can capture emotion and feeling more vividly than accurate imitation'.

• April will be 40 years since Michael and Oya Richardson opened the ArtSpace Gallery in Islington, N1. Given the quality of the artists there, it cannot have been easy to decide on only four for the celebratory show (March 27–May 22): Jeffery Camp, Julian Cooper, Derek Hyatt and George Rowlett, all of whom the gallery has represented since the 1990s. For Mr Richardson, they embody the soul of ArtSpace, painting with 'an independence of spirit, integrity and passion'.

• Elspeth Moncrieff has been running her Moncrieff-Bray Gallery near Petworth, West Sussex, since 2004. Her summer exhibitions will be online only, but 'Patterns of Seeing', a retrospective for John Hitchens (b. 1940) will be very much a physical show, with more than 50 paintings and sculptures (March 28–April 18). Some of his landscapes can be thought of as an extension of his father, Ivon's, work—in no way a criticism—but, at first sight, other paintings (*below*) and wooden sculptures could almost be indigenous Australian.

Lovely Lancashire is underrated

Lancashire: Exploring the Historic County that Made the Modern World
Chris Moss (Old Street, £25)

AN acquaintance once told me that no 18 year old on a gap year should travel to the ends of the earth until they have ventured to the end of their nearest bus route. In a similar vein, those brought up in the north should perhaps also have to spend three months down south and *vice versa*, at least in order to discover that neither is as bad as they'd been brought up to believe. There's no doubt that up north offers more opportunities for splendid isolation, notably Lancashire, the county that too many people miss in their haste to reach more celebrated attractions, such as the Lakes, the Yorkshire moors and the Highlands. For me, a highlight is the magnificent Trough of Bowland, Britain's last great upland wilderness, made all the more appealing by the scarcity of coaches. Inexplicably, it is unheard of by most people, even walkers and twitchers.

> 'It is the county that too many people miss in their haste to reach more celebrated attractions'

There are plenty of other Lancastrian gems: Oliver Hill's magnificent Midland Hotel in Morecambe and the Ashton Memorial, the Taj Mahal of the North, built in 1907 by Lancaster's lino king, Lord Ashton, in memory of his second wife, Jessy, with its butterfly house that offers balmy refuge on a bitter day. Nearby Lancaster Castle offers a grim (yet compelling) insight into our penal past as far back as 1196 that still boasts a working branding iron used up until the early 19th century. Its life as a prison only ended in 2011.

The beauty of Lancashire's Lune valley emerges from the mist at Quernmore Park, Caton

This is a deep dive into the county's urban past, in particular Liverpool, Warrington and the old mill towns in the south and their vital role in the Industrial Revolution. The author is quick to flag that Lancashire isn't what it was; not only has most of the manufacturing gone, but so have two-fifths of its area and more than 3.5 million inhabitants, swept away by boundary changes in 1974. The only urban remnants were Blackpool and Lancaster, left to fend for themselves; a few miles down the M6, regeneration and restoration have brought energy and prosperity to the new metropolitan boroughs, particularly what the author refers to as 'Manc-hattan'. With its sprawling account of Lancashire's past—the Pendle witches, Peterloo, *Corrie* and The Smiths—this thoughtful book does much to evoke its distinctive character, not least a sense of humour artfully captured in *The Liver Birds*, *Bread* and *The Royle Family*, reminders that the region is defined less by its boundaries and more by a dry wit.

Giles Kime

Wilkie Collins on Cornwall
Wilkie Collins
(Bodleian, £16.99)

IN the summer of 1850, Wilkie Collins, a Londoner, travelled by foot through Cornwall with an artist friend, Henry C. Brandling. He was only 26 and on the cusp of his novel-writing career. This book, initially published as *Rambles Beyond Railways, or Notes in Cornwall taken A-Foot* and reissued with a foreword by Rick Stein, pre-empts his brilliance at characterisation and is as fresh and readable as any present-day travelogue. It starts with a vivid description of a boat race and bazaar in Looe being decimated by a downpour: 'Dire was the discomfiture of the poor ladies of Looe. They ran hither and thither for shelter, in lank wet muslin… displaying, in the lamentable emergency of the moment, all sorts of interior contrivances… which we never ought to have seen.'

Today, parts of internal Cornwall, away from the honeypot fishing villages and beaches, struggle economically. Collins observed that 19th-century Cornwall was blessed with mines and fisheries that compensated for poor soils, although in those days the problem was lack of workforce—the county accounted for a high proportion of emigrants—rather than unemployment. He was unimpressed with Liskeard, 'an abomination of desolation' where they stayed in a 'tavern of despair' and dined on 'rugged lumps of broiled flesh, which the landlady called chops', although the 'majesty' of the surrounding moorland and the precariously piled granite slabs that form the famous Cheesewring landmark revived his spirits. Helston receives similarly short shrift, but of the nearby Loe Pool he wrote ecstatically: 'No fairy vision of Nature that ever was imagined is more fantastic'. Probably the most timeless descriptions are those of the coast around Land's End, which are evocative and enticing—'The whole bold view possesses all the sublimity that vastness and space can bestow'—illustrating why, nearly two centuries later, this county continues to exert magic on visitors. *KG*

Alamy; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/Public Domain

Solar Eclipses
William Sheehan
(Reaktion, £25)

THIS book could be subtitled 'a history of awe'. Solar eclipses, which inspire fear, personal transformations and millennia-long scientific quests, offer a rich subject. William Sheehan, an American psychiatrist and astronomical historian who has an asteroid named after him, tells how their study has moved the dial on mathematics, brought breakthroughs in navigation, contributed to the discovery of gravity and vindicated Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. He begins with a bold move for an author. 'Words fail,' he writes on witnessing his first total eclipse. 'The experience is simply impossible to convey.' He does, however, manage to describe its effect: that of being caught off guard, overwhelmed by emotion. The brain, he realises, processes this spectacle deep in the amygdala, its most primitive part.

The book moves swiftly to history. Through a line-up of most of the famous discoverers of whom you've ever heard—Ptolemy, Copernicus, Sir Isaac Newton and Edmond Halley—we get to grips with celestial mechanics. At each stage, the author explains the mystery being cracked, such as the calculations needed to elucidate the motions of the moon: 'a nearly circular wobbling ellipsoid influenced by the gravitational pull of all the other bodies in the solar system'. Minor personalities shine through, such as Greek poet Archilochus, who, upon seeing a total eclipse on April 6, 648BC, wrote that nothing after this would seem impossible or marvellous, not even if one were to see 'wild beasts changing places with dolphins'.

Eyes on the skies: the sheer spectacle of the solar eclipse will always draw a crowd, as in Paris in Eugène Atget's *Eclipse, 1911*

Anecdotal details alleviate the technical ones, such as Newton choosing to furnish his apartments entirely in crimson, a decision said to have induced irritability in his later years. Imagine being Quaker pacifist and Cambridge professor of astronomy Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, who prepared for two years to observe the total solar eclipse of May 29, 1919, as being the best way of testing Einstein's Theory. Having travelled to the Gulf of Guinea and spent a month setting up instruments, he was stymied by clouds obscuring the view for almost the entire 302 seconds' duration.

Mr Sheehan ends by invoking the attempts of poets and thinkers to capture 'the most awe-inspiring phenomenon in all nature… it suggests infinity; the sight of it paralyses thought, stuns and puzzles the will'. There is also an appendix of the solar eclipses expected from 2026 to 2029, plus illustrations and photographs throughout. These are helpful, yet unfortunate in giving the impression of a textbook rather than the illuminating read it is.
Laura Parker

Wartime Letters: London and Moscow 1941–1945
Kathleen Harriman, Ed. Geoffrey Roberts (Yale, £30)

KATHLEEN HARRIMAN was 23 when she arrived in London in May 1941. Under the headline 'Girl from the U.S.A.', the *Evening Standard* reported that 'Miss Harriman, slender with brown hair and blue eyes, will write dispatches from the woman's point of view for the International News Service [INS]'. The INS could not have found a better-placed reporter. A woman of shining intelligence, attractive, energetic, intrepid, resilient, acutely observant, blessed with sensibility and sophisticated yet grounded in the real pleasures of life—horses, for one thing—'Kathy' had the priceless asset of connections. Her father, Averell, had recently arrived as President Roosevelt's special envoy to expedite the lend-lease programme enacted in March. The US was not yet in the war, but Roosevelt declared the country 'the arsenal of democracy', and Britain needed everything the arsenal could provide. To Churchill, therefore, Harriman was the second most important American.

> 'A woman of shining intelligence, "Kathy" had the priceless asset of connections'

Harriman then began an affair with Churchill's 21-year-old daughter-in-law, Pamela—Kathy remarks on how age doesn't seem to matter in London in wartime. Military officers, both senior and junior, charm her. One cavalry major is 'without doubt the best looking man I've ever seen', although 'unfortunately, God forgot about giving him much brains'. She soon took up with Pamela, renting a weekend cottage with her in Surrey. Her letters home naturally enough give none of the affair away, at least directly. They do, however, provide a wonderful picture of London (and to an extent, provincial England) at that dramatic point in the war when we had seen off the Luftwaffe and the threat of invasion, but still stood alone, Germany not yet having invaded Russia. The letters contain profound observations on why Britain and Britons were fighting, alongside requests for silk stockings and lipstick. She is at Chequers when Churchill receives the news of Pearl Harbor. Picture that.

If all this isn't enough, in October 1943, when the Soviets turned the tide at Kursk, Harriman is sent to Moscow as ambassador and Kathy accompanies him as his diplomatic hostess. She goes to Yalta, too. At the end of the war, Stalin gives her a horse. The letters are curated with perfectly pitched commentary, meticulous annotations and arresting photographs. The author, emeritus professor of history at University College, Co Cork, has produced a work of illuminating history and vivid entertainment. I was enthralled.
Allan Mallinson

Subscription offer

COUNTRY LIFE

Inspiring Britain since 1897

COUNTRY LIFE
EVERY WEEK
The interiors issue
Rejoice in the return of the eclectic
Rita Konig on the importance of 'stuff'
Pip, pip! The extraordinary marvel of seeds
Saving newts and lobsters: the real wildlife heroes
COUNTRY LIFE
EVERY WEEK
JULY 23, 2025
ndest, sweetest dog'
the greyhound won Jilly Cooper's heart
Bedtime rituals: how to keep the romance
Steam power and not-so-lonesome pine martens

ONLY **£4** AN ISSUE

Easy ways to subscribe

Visit www.magazinesdirect.com/XCL/DN22U

Telephone 0330 333 1120 (*quote code DN22U*)

Your first issue will arrive 4–6 weeks after payment is processed. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. Visit us at www.magazinesdirect.com for international pricing and other subscription options. Print and digital magazine subscribers can access the digital back catalogue for as long as their subscription is active. Offer expires April 30, 2026

Bridge Andrew Robson

SOME contracts appear hopeless, others fabulous. Let's start with the former. There is a line to make Six Spades on the ten of Spades lead—gold star if you can find it.

Dealer South
Both Vulnerable

	♠ 63 ♥ 10643 ♦ 84 ♣ 87432	
♠ 10987 ♥ A972 ♦ 1076 ♣ 106	N W E S	♠ 4 ♥ QJ85 ♦ J9532 ♣ KJ9
	♠ AKQJ52 ♥ K ♦ AKQ ♣ AQ5	

South	West	North	East
2♣(1)	Pass	2♦(2)	Pass
2♠(3)	Pass	2NT(4)	Pass
3♠(5)	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♠(6)	End		

1) Strongest bid in Bridge, unrelated to Clubs.
2) Negative or waiting.
3) Forcing to game with at least five Spades.
4) Again, consistent with nothing, but could be another waiting bid without three Spades or a good suit.
5) Showing the sixth Spade.
6) Should pass. At no point has partner shown anything.

You win the Spade lead and play out the three top Diamonds, ruffing the third to reach dummy (there's no other way!) to take the Club finesse. A Club to the Queen wins, but it still appears you must lose the third Club and the Ace of Hearts.

You draw trumps and play your two long Spades and the Ace of Clubs. You have two cards remaining—the King of Hearts and the losing third Club. What are East's last two cards?

They are the winning Club and therefore only one Heart—the Queen (or Knave). West's last two cards are Ace-nine of Hearts (for he has run out of minors); you retain ten-low of Hearts in dummy. Now do you see from where your 12th trick is coming?

At trick 12, you lead the King of Hearts. West wins the Ace as East's Queen is pinned—whereupon you win the last trick with dummy's ten of Hearts, tantalisingly beating West's nine.

There was no defence on the layout—but, boy, was it a favourable layout. For a start, West would have defeated you by leading the Ace of Hearts. Even after the understandable Spade lead, you needed the Club finesse to work, West to have no more than three Diamonds and two Clubs (or he keeps that minor suit and bares his Ace of Hearts), and him to have the Ace of Hearts without either the Queen or the Knave.

Now for an excellent slam that you must try to turn into a certainty. Plan the play in Six Notrumps on the ten of Diamonds lead.

Dealer South
Neither Vulnerable

	♠ AK42 ♥ K4 ♦ J753 ♣ K75	
♠ J83 ♥ QJ75 ♦ 1098 ♣ Q106	N W E S	♠ 9765 ♥ 86 ♦ 64 ♣ 98432
	♠ Q10 ♥ A10932 ♦ AKQ2 ♣ AJ	

South	West	North	East
2NT(1)	Pass	3♣(2)	Pass
3♥	Pass	6NT(3)	End

1) Practical shot, despite being slightly unbalanced.
2) Asking for four-card majors.
3) Should technically bid Five Notrumps, pick a slam, enabling South to bid Six Spades with a fourth Spade (or, as here, Six Diamonds—actually, declarer can make Seven Diamonds on careful play).

Here is the 100% certain line. You cash four rounds of Diamonds, then play the King of Hearts and a Heart to the ten. West wins the Knave, but whatever he does now gives you an extra trick—he is endplayed in three suits. A Spade runs to the Queen-ten, giving you a fourth trick in the suit; a third Heart sets up your suit; and a Club runs to your Ace-Knave, giving you a third trick.

Incidentally, the way to make Seven Diamonds (on, say, a Diamond lead) is to draw only two rounds (preferably retaining dummy's Knave, but you survive either way). You then play King of Hearts, a Heart to the Ace and ruff a Heart. East is out of Hearts, but also out of Diamonds. You cross to hand in a black suit, ruff a fourth Heart, and it's all over bar the shouting.

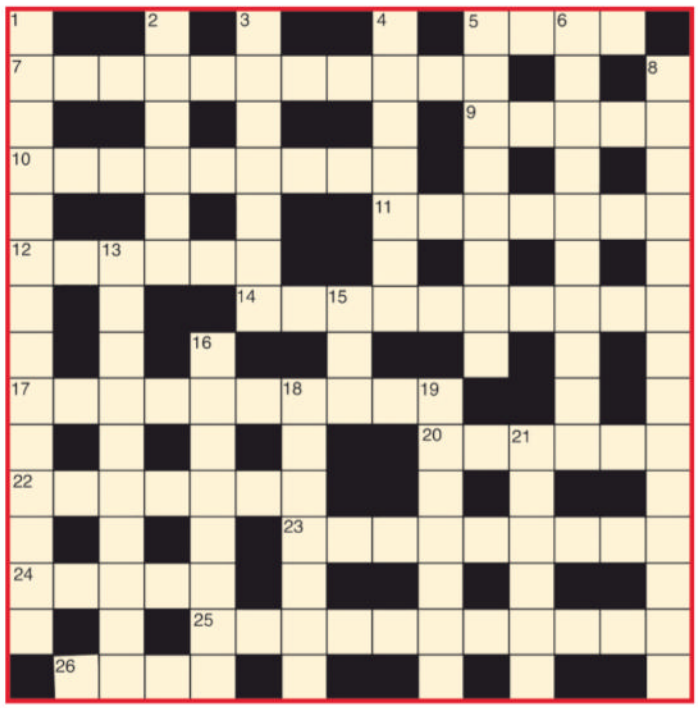
Crossword

A prize of £25 in book tokens will be awarded for the first correct solution opened. Solutions must reach Crossword No 4919, Country Life, 121–141 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington, London, W2 6JR, by **Tuesday, March 3**. UK entrants only

ACROSS
5 Louts sofa surfing (4)
7 Had inferior figures as unfashionable and limited (11)
9 Podgy overweight boy eagerly stops exercising first (5)
10 One who declines reportedly to steal rubbish (9)
11 One who massages initial efficiency report after demand one hears (7)
12 Run in small type (6)
14 Without assistance of small pixies employed by second person (10)
17 Matron seen devising means of measurement (10)
20 Potato has protein match (6)
22 Carry out murder (7)
23 Helper to fool first worker (9)
24 Cable pitch length (5)
25 Unfeeling proposal under first examination (11)
26 Emperor is star turn (4)

DOWN
1 Agreement in writing (14)
2 Ring shaped objects retract as one (6)
3 Pardon set many free (7)
4 Angry strikebreaker leaves Serbia with traveller (7)
5 Clock that it goes the distance (8)
6 Take exact temperature for athletic contest (5,5)
8 See instruction to employ expert in nervous system (14)
13 Holds backs after game of golf to give out music for songs (10)
15 Employ in museum (3)
16 Prime gun to fire at attacker (8)
18 Time is cause of betrayal (7)
19 Grating sound when good man shot otherwise (7)
21 Scandalmonger has story about race (6)

4919 **TAIT**



SOLUTION TO 4918

ACROSS: 3, Sketchiest; 8, Misuse; 9, Lethal; 10, Half as good; 11, Curtly; 12, Bowsprit; 15, Rattling; 18, Conifers; 19, Trousers; 22, Revere; 23, Cuttlebone; 26, Giblet; 27, Torpid; 28, Skedaddles. DOWN: 1, Mikado; 2, Buff; 3, Sensor; 4, Ergo; 5, Cold cuts; 6, Interplays; 7, Starling; 13, Shrivelled; 14, Tryst; 16, Homesick; 17, Dejected; 20, Owlets; 21, Rancid; 24, Teal; 25, Barb.

The winner of 4917 is Doug Wilson, London

Pre-Prep Outdoor Adventure Morning

Saturday 25th April, 9.00 - 11.30 am

To book, email registrar@elstreeschool.org.uk or call 0118 971 3302

ELSTREE DAY AND BOARDING SCHOOL FOR BOYS AND GIRLS AGED 2-13
WOOLHAMPTON, BERKSHIRE, RG7 5TD | WWW.ELSTREESCHOOL.ORG.UK

/ElstreeSchool

LEWESTON CHEDINGTON EQUESTRIAN CENTRE

Experience exceptional equestrian education at our riding academy, offering a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities.

Home to the award-winning Leweston Equestrian Team, facilities include: 20 stables, flood-lit arena, and dedicated classroom.

Book a visit and discover Leweston, where education meets inspiration.

LEWESTON
SHERBORNE

01963 211015 | www.leweston.co.uk | admissions@leweston.dorset.sch.uk
Leweston School, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 6EN
NURSERY • PREP • SENIOR • SIXTH FORM

Another world awaits...

- A global community rooted in heritage
- Academic rigour within a high-performing setting
- A flexible boarding culture that adapts to each family's needs
- Secure, seamless and all-encompassing care

STONYHURST

Open Days March & May

Co-ed 3-18 | Boarding & Day | Jesuit, Catholic School
stonyhurst.ac.uk/opendays

THE WEEK Independent Schools guide
WINNER Best Senior School for Boarding

Join the school voted The Best Senior School for Boarding

IGNITE
YOUR POTENTIAL
Joining Year 7 in 2027?
Discover Kingswood Senior School with our bespoke Year 7 and 8 offering, helping pupils settle and thrive into Senior School life.
School In Action Morning:
Thursday 12th March, 9am

Register here

A CO-EDUCATIONAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
FROM NINE MONTHS TO 18 YEARS IN BATH

Learn more and book a visit at **kingswood.bath.sch.uk**

KINGSWOOD
BATH

Summer Fields
OXFORD
PRE-PREP AND PREP
70 acres of opportunity
OPEN EVENTS - London and Oxford
10 & 12 March, 8 & 9 May
www.summerfields.com | 01865 459204 |admissions@summerfields.com

Fettes College

A world-class education
An iconic setting

‘Outstanding Curriculum’

Education Scotland

- Co-educational full boarding and day school (5-18 yrs)
- Academic excellence in GCSE, A Level and IB
- Sector leading pastoral care
- An extensive co-curricular programme of activities
- 100-acre campus offering all the advantages of a city school with the privacy and space of a rural setting

Scan to join us in Edinburgh for our next Open Day

Contact Admissions to arrange a visit and find out more

t: 0131 311 6744 | e: admissions@fettes.com | w: fettes.com

A place to live. A place to learn. A place to grow.

THE SCHOOL FOR ADVENTUROUS MINDS

At King Edward's School, we believe in providing an outstanding all-round education that equips our pupils with the tools and confidence to thrive and be happy today, while preparing them for whatever the future may hold.

KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL BATH

BOOK A PERSONALISED TOUR

If you would like to arrange an individual tour of our Nursery and Prep-Prep, Junior School, Senior School or Sixth Form, please visit our website or speak to our Admissions team. All welcome!

Book a visit:
kesbath.com/visit-us
or call 01225 820 399

THE SUNDAY TIMES SCHOOLS GUIDE 2026 INDEPENDENT SECONDARY SCHOOL OF THE YEAR SOUTH WEST

SHORTLIST 2026 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

★★★★★ TOP CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL IN THE UK 2025 & 2026

★★★★★ UK BOARDING SCHOOL OF THE YEAR 2025 & 2026

BRIGHTON COLLEGE

UK SCHOOL OF THE DECADE

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Ludgrove

TATLER Ludgrove School School Guide 2026

SHORTLIST 2026 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The cricketer SCHOOLS GUIDE 2026 TOP 50

ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

- Boys' 100% boarding prep school with fortnightly exeats
- Excellent pastoral and academic record • Bursaries available
- 130 acres of grounds • Fully compliant in the 2025 ISI inspection
- Bus to Fulham and Newbury on exeat weekends and start/end of Half Term
- Simon Barber, voted Best Head of a Prep School in the Tatler Schools Awards

Ludgrove, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 3AB 0118 978 9881
registrar@ludgroveschool.co.uk www.ludgrove.net Instagram - ludgrove_school

the directory

Country Life Classified Advertising Guide

To advertise in this Classified section please contact:

Scarlett Glendenning
07938 735 212
scarlett.glendenning@futurenet.com

Property

STATONS

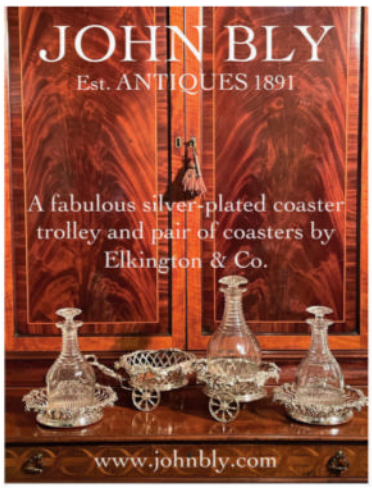
FROM COTTAGES TO COUNTRY ESTATES

BARNET	020 8449 3383
TOTTERIDGE	020 8445 3694
HADLEY WOOD	020 8440 9797
BROOKMANS PARK	01707 661144
PREMIER LETTINGS	020 8441 9796
NEW HOMES SHOWCASE	020 8441 9555

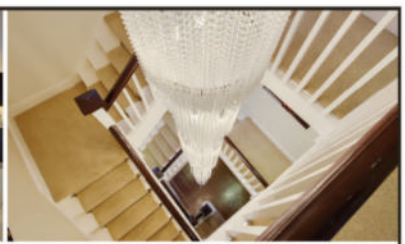
www.statons.com incorporating BLADE

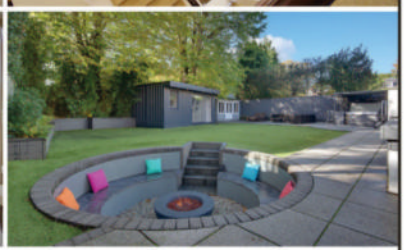
Please mention Country Life when replying to adverts
~ thank you ~

Art & Antiques


JOHN BLY
Est. ANTIQUES 1891
A fabulous silver-plated coaster trolley and pair of coasters by Elkington & Co.
www.johnbly.com

Property





Set on a desirable leafy road in Bournemouth and within a mile of the town centre, this outstanding six-bedroom, six-bathroom detached residence combines timeless classical style with luxurious modern living. Perfectly positioned close to local amenities, the train station, and major carriageway links, this home offers the ideal blend of elegance, space, and convenience.

Upon entering, you are greeted by a grand entrance hallway featuring a stunning two-storey drop chandelier and classic detailing that sets the tone for the quality found throughout. Space is in abundance, with two additional reception rooms offering flexibility for formal dining, a study, or family relaxation.

The heart of the home is the magnificent open-plan kitchen, dining, and living area — a truly impressive space for entertaining and family life. The kitchen boasts a substantial central island, high-spec integrated appliances, and stylish finishes throughout. Bi-fold doors flood the space with natural light and open directly onto the beautifully landscaped rear garden, seamlessly connecting indoor and outdoor living. A separate utility room provides practicality and extra storage.

For leisure and entertainment, the property features an impressive indoor swimming pool with jet function. This also has changing and shower facilities. There is a terrific cinema room, perfect for family movie nights or entertaining guests. With raised flooring and surround sound.

Both the pool and kitchen open directly onto the large patio and garden, enhancing the home's exceptional flow and social appeal.

Outside, the landscaped rear garden is designed for year-round enjoyment, complete with a spacious patio seating area, fire pit, and an impressive outdoor kitchen- ideal for hosting gatherings. There is also a covered jacuzzi style hot tub and the lawn is artificial for ease of maintenance

A detached garden room offers further versatility, housing an additional bar, and games area, creating the perfect retreat for guests or family recreation. There is also another dedicated garden room, that houses the comprehensive gym. Both of these spaces have air conditioning.

Agent: **Will Croker** • **+447702 730 690** • Please visit **www.willcroker.exp.uk.com** for more information

Ceramic restoration

Conservation-led restoration of ceramics, porcelain and sculptural objects.

We advise on condition, treatment and long-term care for inherited and damaged items, working with private owners, estates and insurers across the UK.

Nationwide collection available.

FINE ART RESTORATION COMPANY

For considered guidance on your objects, please contact us:

0207 112 7576

www.fineart-restoration.co.uk

Paul Bowskill

FINE ART AND ANTIQUES

Paul Bowskill Fine Art & Antiques wish to acquire paintings & sculptures by well-known British & European artists.

We are also interested in important English furniture & clocks from the 17th, 18th & 19th Centuries.

For further information do contact us:
enquiries@paulbowskill.com

paulbowskill.com

GÜTLIN

Clocks and Antiques

Specialist repair and restoration of antique clocks, all types of clocks repaired and serviced, collection and delivery available, home visits, free estimates!

606 King's Road, SW6 2DX | Tel: 020 7384 2804 | www.gutlin.com | Email: mark@gutlin.com

Interiors

WANTED

for Georgian townhouse restoration in Yorkshire

Regency coal scuttle. Prefer brass, but steel also considered. (pictured)

Exceptionally good Regency sofa with fine carving or brass inlay.

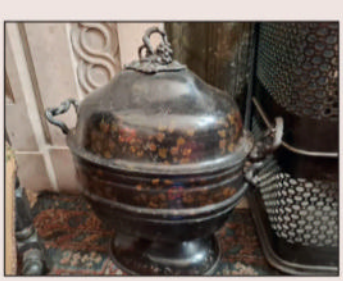
Hogarth prints. Prefer lifetime or Boydell editions. Marriage a la Mode, Beer Street/Gin Lane, The Rake's Progress, Four Times of the Day, Lord Lovat etc. Also Gillray and Rowlandson prints.

Wide reclaimed Georgian floorboards. Pine OK. 9 inch +. Approx 25m2 needed. (pictured)

Small sized Georgian marble or wood fire surrounds x 5, Circa 1800-ish.

Labelled or stamped furniture from 1760s to early Victorian. Morgan & Sanders, Robert Brown of Bristol, Wilkinson of Ludgate Hill, Seddon, John Durham and hundreds more. Also unsigned furniture with credible dealer or auction provenance eg Mallett, Partridge, Grosvenor House etc.

Chamber horse exercise chair. Domestic barrel organ (pictured)



07958 333442 or vintagejewellery@yahoo.co.uk

schplendid

sofas made for ever, *not for landfill*

www.schplendid.com

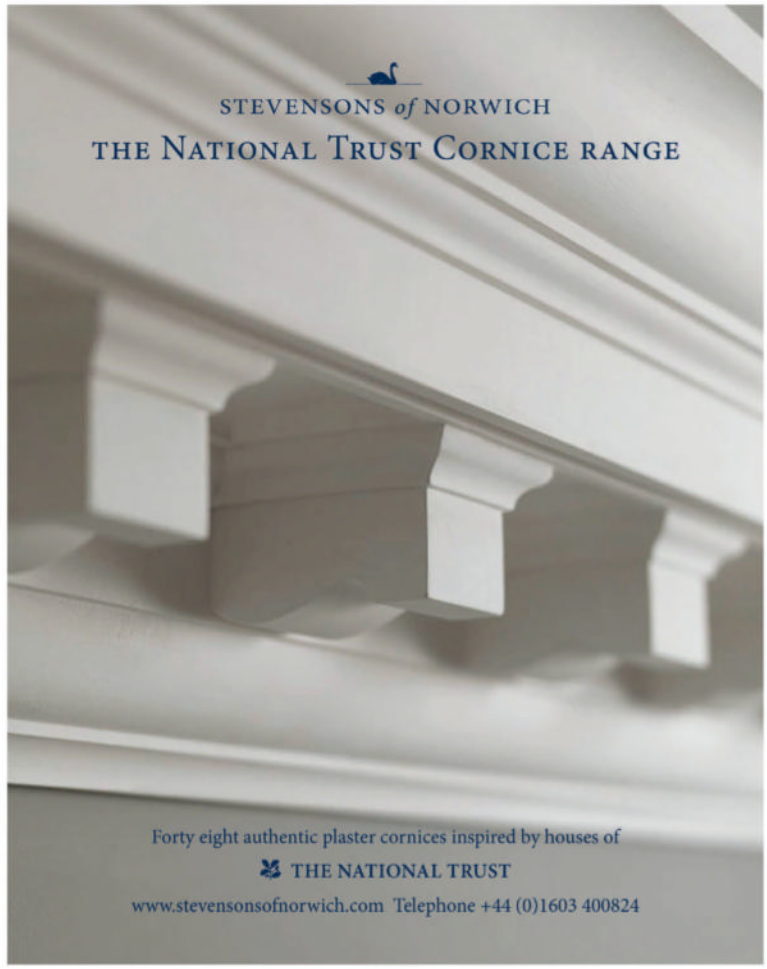
kleanSTONE
Bringing floors back to life

Spring starts with fresh floors!

Get your house spotless for the brand new season with this floor cleaning range...

info@kleanstone.com 01482 296477 kleanstone.com

STEVENSONS of NORWICH
THE NATIONAL TRUST CORNICE RANGE



Forty eight authentic plaster cornices inspired by houses of
THE NATIONAL TRUST
www.stevensonsofnorwich.com Telephone +44 (0)1603 400824

CLASSIC AND ELEGANT CUTLERY
- designed for modern living

This delightful range is O.E. Fiddle mirror finish stainless steel with Dishwasher Safe Cream Handled Knives. "Square Handle & Parallel Blades".

~ Special Price for Country Life readers ~

- Set for six people at £540, this includes six 7 pieces place settings (as shown) & 2 Table Spoons. A set for four people costs £340 *Prices include VAT and UK delivery

GLAZEBROOK & CO

To investigate, please visit **www.glazebrook.com**
Email: sales@glazebrook.com or to order call 020 7731 7135

WANTED

WANTED VINTAGE WRISTWATCHES

Rolex Princes. Rectangular steel/ silver or gold.

Rolex Oysters from 1920s to 1970s eg cushion shaped and octagonal. Oysterquartz 1980s. Gold and steel Rolex dress watches from 1950s to 1970s. Ladies Rolex watches also

Omegas. Marine 2 part 1930s models through to 1970s Seamasters, Constellations etc.

IWC. Civilian and military models.

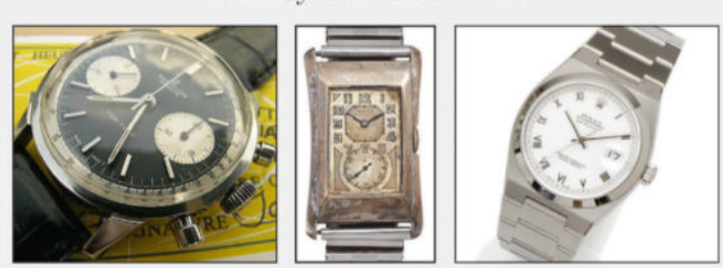
Cartier pre 1980.

Breitling TopTime, Daytora, Navitimer etc

Jaeger LeCoultre. Reversos and circular models eg Geomatic, Geophysic, Memovox alarm etc.

Audemars Piguet, Vacheron Constantin and Patek-Philippe from 1940s to 1970s.

Tudor. Oysters or dress models.



vintagejewellery@yahoo.co.uk or 07958 333442

Jonathan Self

Dogs behaving badly

I CHEWED my granny's passport and now she is stuck in Canada.' 'I stole a sandwich from a homeless person.' 'I ate the cleaner's flipflops, and she had to go home without any shoes.' 'I encourage strangers to pet me and then I bite them.' Who could have guessed when the information superhighway was being invented that one of its most successful byproducts would be dog-shaming photographs? Throw a stick on the internet and you'll hit a picture of a poor, well-meaning hound wearing a sign around its neck bearing details of some crime or misdemeanour.

I would never embarrass any of our own dogs in this way. I wouldn't even mention Millie, a canine Raffles, whose speciality was waiting in the shrubbery during the barbecue season until everyone's back was turned and then, quick as a flash, whipping a steak straight from the grill; Honey, from whom no rambler (not that I entirely blame her) was ever safe; Lucy, an Australian cattle dog, who during Jack's sixth birthday party, rounded up a dozen of his friends and herded them into a pen; or Eddie the Rescue, known by our vet as Edward Scissormouth, and especially not Cosmo, who did actually eat all of Oliver's homework.

Although I am deeply honoured to be one of the adjudicators of Britain's Naughtiest Dog—launched in this very issue of COUNTRY LIFE—I must confess that my sympathies are more canine than human. Actually, I was so chuffed to be invited to become a judge that the artisan dog-food company I started is sponsoring the competition. You may wonder what an artisan dog-food producer such as myself does all day. Partly because of my age and partly because I am so cackhanded, I am not allowed to use the bandsaw or mincer and thus was relieved of production duties many years ago. Instead, as we like to know where our meat and vegetables come from, I spend a good deal of time either talking to our producers or making farm visits. Not to brag or anything, but in an effort to keep dog-food miles to a minimum, we now source one-third of our ingredients within 17 miles of our kitchens. What else? Well, I ooh and aah over our customers' dog photographs and pretend it is work and I write obituaries for the dogs we fed who have died and arrange for trees to be planted in their names on Dartmoor. Perhaps the most important thing I do is to campaign for higher standards within the dog-food industry. The vast majority of dog food is ultra processed and made from waste ingredients: rotten meat, low-quality grain and old vegetables that would otherwise have to be disposed of. The meat, incidentally, is invariably factory farmed and, worst of all, it is cooked.

> 'Eddie the Rescue was known by our vet as Edward Scissormouth; Cosmo did actually eat Oliver's homework'

Our belief is that dogs live healthier, happier and longer lives on a natural, raw-food diet. I'm not saying all dogs should eat raw—there are some with health conditions that could make it unwise—but many should, which is why I feel it is so important to expose the lies told to dog owners by pet-food companies. How I wish I could hang signs around their executives' necks with messages such as: 'The packaging for the kibble we sell costs more than the ingredients.' Not that it would compete with my favourite example of dog shaming: 'Every day I convince my brother to come outside with me and then I rush back in and eat his food'—raw food, one hopes.

Next week **Patrick Galbraith**

TOTTERING-BY-GENTLY By Annie Tempest

Visit Tottering-By-Gently on our website: **www.countrylife.co.uk/tottering**

Very smart, Sir. That will be £45, please...
£45!... Sheep shearers get £2.50 for a whole sheep and I've only got about 7 wisps left!
Sheep don't require cappuccino, small talk or a premises a stone's throw from Boodles, Sir...
Annie Tempest ©2026

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

All contents © 2026 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and although every care is taken neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

COUNTRY LIFE is a member of the IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation), which regulates the UK print and digital news industry. We abide by the Editors' Code of Practice and are committed to upholding the highest standards of journalism. If you think that we have not met those standards and want to make a complaint, please email complaints@futurenet.com. If we are unable to resolve your complaint, or if you would like more information about IPSO or the Editors' Code, contact IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or visit www.ipso.co.uk.

recycle When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it

ipso. Regulated

ABC Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation

HARTLEY BOTANIC
NULLI SECUNDUS
HANDMADE WITH PRIDE SINCE 1938
Your Space, Your Story
Request a brochure
0800 783 8083 | www.hartley-botanic.co.uk
Victorian Manor | Georgia, USA
RHS
THE QUEEN'S AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE: INTERNATIONAL TRADE 2021
The only aluminium Glasshouses and Greenhouses endorsed by the RHS. ®The Royal Horticultural Society. Trade marks of The Royal Horticultural Society (Registered Charity No 222879/SC038262) used under licence from RHS Enterprises Limited.

PATEK PHILIPPE
GENEVE

WORLD TIME REF. 7130R

BEGIN YOUR OWN TRADITION

Pragnell

9006